

MARK LEYNER

I LOVE MY WIFE'S **GUTS**

The Haunted Life of J.D. Salinger

BY RON ROSENBAUM



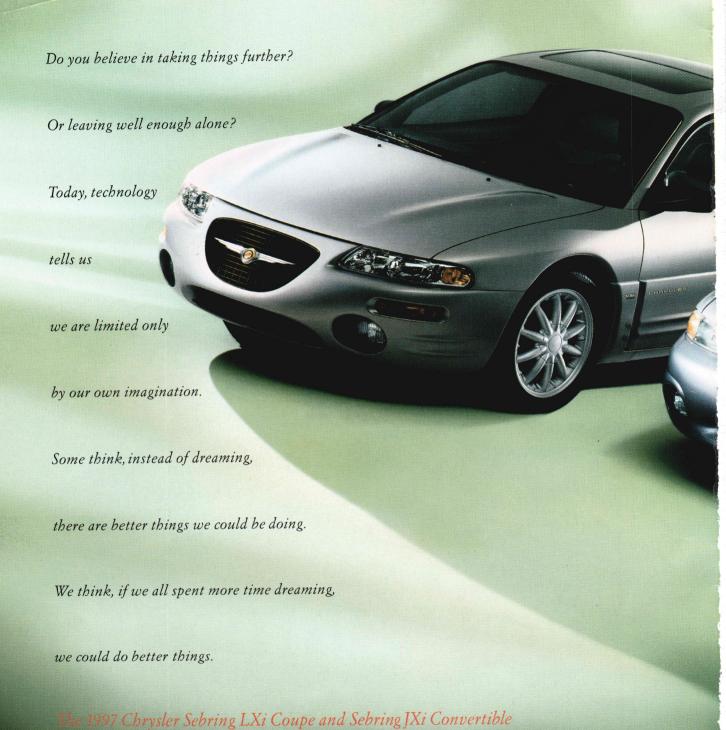
OF A TALK-

SIDEKICK

SHOW

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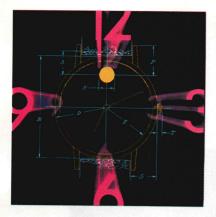
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Esquire

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BY PAUL JOHNSON

Whitewater. Indogate. Filegate. Paula Jones. Bill Clinton, says a leading historian, really is America's most unethical president.



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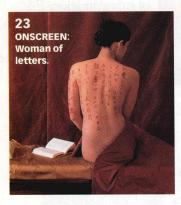


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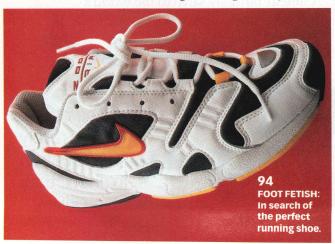
This entertaining month: the collected letters of Hunter S. Thompson; Peter Greenaway's new skin flick; second-guessing No Doubt: the up-and-comely Milla Iovovich; and more.

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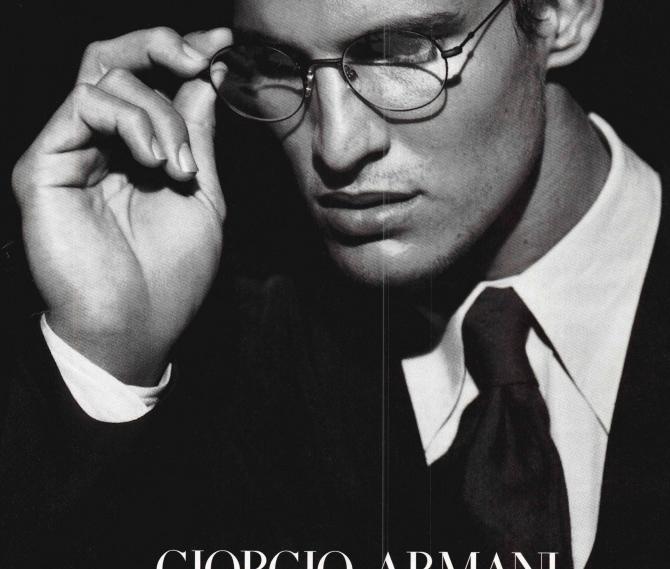
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GIORGIO ARMANI
OCCHIALI

Measuring Up

OUR MARCH MALE-VANITY COVer "firmed up" an opinion I have "long" had: Esquire rules!

-BENIAMIN BERNSTEIN Edmond, Okla.

Still on the Ball

IKE RICK TELANDER, I have defined myself for years by the level of my athletic ability ("Over the Hill, My Ass!" March). A lifetime of sprains, strains, dislocations, and concussions too numerous to count put me where three years as a

starting Big Ten linebacker could not-on the sidelines. Reading Telander's article, I can honestly say I know whence he comes and where he is going. Rick, I'll save you a seat in the stands right behind the visitors' bench.

-Chuck Thomson Phoenix, Ariz.

WITHIN TWO MONTHS OF MY fortieth birthday, I had rotatorcuff surgery. I refrained from most activities and diligently did my rehab over the course of five months so that when I made a comeback, I would be "bulletproof." I wanted to be 100 percent, and I am-100 percent for a forty-year-old. Recovery after I play takes much longer, and everything hurts more. It really sucks, but I'll still kick your ass.

-ARTHUR COHEN Miami, Fla.

HAVE OFTEN WONDERED, WHILE chewing a handful of aspirin and pressing an ice pack to a clicking shoulder or surgery-scarred knee, Where will I be when it's over? Or, more important, who will I be? I think Rick Telander knows. As long as I am out there, the sport will never leave me. In the wake of sprains and surgeries, of shaking heads that insist I should know better, that is all that counts.

> -TRAVIS SIMPKINS Cumming, Ga.

Guilty Pleasures

Esquire

THE TRUTH ABOUT

male vanity

READ MICHAEL SOLOMON'S ARTIcle on male vanity ("I Feel Pretty," March) with sheer delight! It's nice to see a male reaction to the primping and pampering that we're all guilty of indulging in.

-DIANA E. NAVARRO San Leandro, Calif.

Payback Time

AT THE END OF THE March Male Vanity issue, I was pleasantly surprised to find the piece on Thomas Kelly and his new novel, Payback (Mr. Peepers, Esq.,

by Julie Baumgold). After reading both the article and Kelly's excellent book, I am convinced he was the perfect counter to all the embarrassingly vain essayists who filled the rest of the issue. For Kelly comes from a segment of the male population that will never contemplate a chest wax or penile implant, moan about shinsplints after weekly basketball games, or be told by a doctor to cut back on the single-malt Scotches; and he'll still be able to go out and bang a model or two.

> -SEAN M. REILLY New York, N.Y.

Grand Godfather

AGREE WITH DAVID THOMSON ON the greatness of The Godfather (Cinema Verité, March). As for his negative opinion of Part III, I'm curious: Is this the same David Thomson who, in his Biographical Dictionary of Film, Third Edition, describes The Godfather, Part III as "more worthwhile than general opinion suggests, and one of Francis Ford Coppola's most candid films"? As for me, I agree with Martin Scorsese, who said in Esquire last year ("My Favorite Thing," June 1996) that certain films capture the collective imagination and become touchstones for all other works before and after and that the Godfather saga in its three parts is one of these creations.

> -Steve Barr Culver City, Calif.

DAVID THOMSON REPLIES: Yes, I am the author of A Biographical Dictionary of Film, and I do hold both views: The Godfather, Part III is a serious falling-off after the first two films yet not as bad as its first reviews said. In fact, Part III was rushed to meet an inescapable release date. Since then, Coppola has had the chance to do a reedit that is available on video-in the boxed set of the three films. And that version is a lot better than the movie that was released in theaters.

THERE IS ONE MAJOR OVERSIGHT in David Thomson's piece: The author and co-screenwriter, Mario Puzo, is never mentioned. In discussing the brilliance of the film, one must certainly credit the genius who created the story. Without Puzo, there would be no Godfather saga and certainly no Michael Corleone, role model.

> -RICHARD W. FUREY Brightwaters, N.Y.

The Homophobe Within

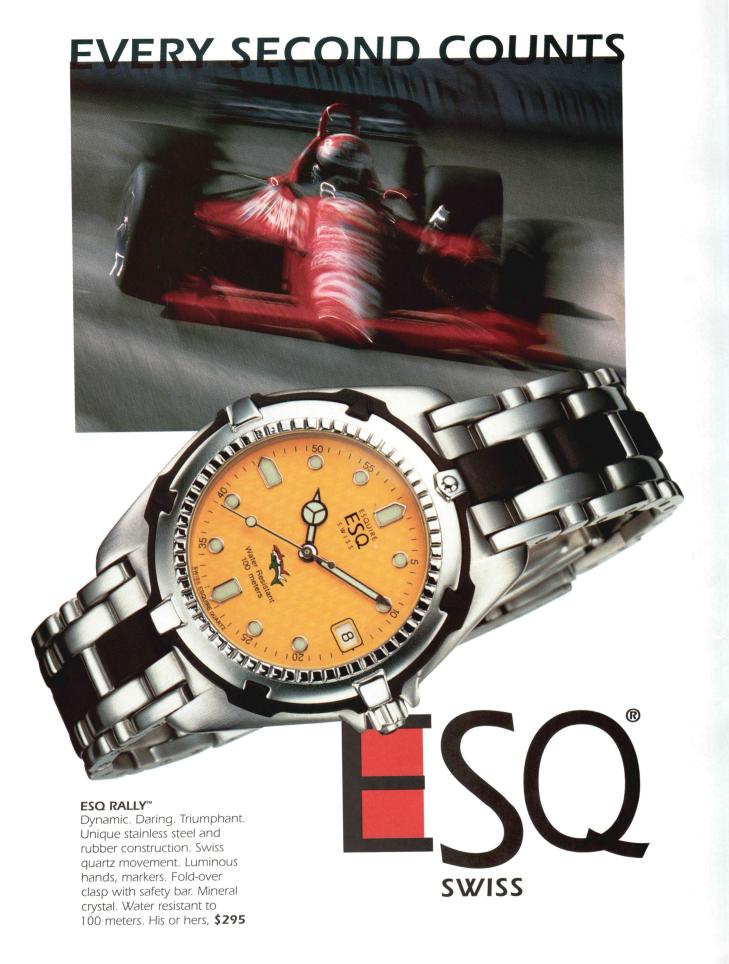
FTER READING THE FEBRUARY Aissue, I was amazed at how Michael Segell managed to hit the nail on the head ("Homophobia Doesn't Lie," The Male Animal). Many gays like me didn't come out easily. I felt very threatened by outward expressions of homosexuality and had to overcome these feelings before I became comfortable with being myself. Making the transition from the closet to life involves a lot of soul-searching, pain, and tears. Thoughtful articles like this will make the process less painful for those on the same journey of self-discovery.

-MICHAEL HAASE Anchorage, Alaska

CORRECTION: The April Money Talks column on annuities listed the wrong phone number for First Colony Life Insurance. The correct number is 888-325-5433.

Letters to the editor should be mailed to The Sound and the Fury, Esquire, 250 West Fiftyfifth Street, New York, N.Y. 10019, or sent by e-mail to esquire@hearst.com. Include your full name, address, and daytime phone number. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.







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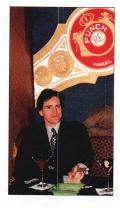
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The Cigar Lounge That Packs a Punch

The mood was jovial, the drinks were impeccably prepared, and the cigars were supremely satisfying. Esquire recently invited readers to the grand opening of the Punch Cigar Lounge in Boston.

Located in the heart of the Sheraton Boston, this inviting lounge draws its inspiration from

Punch, the incorrigible mascot of England's *Punch* humor magazine and cigar. For more information, call the Sheraton Boston Hotel & Towers at 617-236-2000.

Broadway Has Two New Faces: One Good, One Evil

England, 1885. By day, Dr. Henry Jekyll pursues medical



advances beyond the imagination of his peers. At night, however, he's a different animal altogether. So goes the classic tale of *Jekyll & Hyde*, now a thrilling musical on Broadway. Directed by Robin Phillips and featuring a soaring score by Frank Wildhorn, *Jekyll & Hyde* explores the fine line between a good man and a madman. Now at the Plymouth Theatre. For tickets call 212-239-6200.

Get Lucky-and Charitable

Legend has it that Eve plucked a four-leaf clover from the Garden of Eden to remind her of life in paradise. Modern legend has it that some of that luck rubs off on everyone who wears clothing by Lucky Brand. To help those less fortunate,

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A Fresh Take

A new design and a recast editorial mix propel Esquire toward the millennium

The issue you hold in your hands reflects Esquire's latest updating-a bold and elegant new design to showcase a recast editorial mix that emphasizes both compelling journalism and comprehensive service, including the most sophisticated fashion in men's magazines.

This fresh take has its inspiration in Esquire's heritage but with a sharpened awareness that today's men-and the women they share their lives with-have different interests and concerns than they had even a decade ago. Time is the most precious commodity at the frantic end of the century. So a magazine must reward a reader's commitment with substance and the pleasure that only the best writers can provide.

June esquire sends its writers from the hills of New Hampshire to Hollywood to a drab industrial city hundreds of miles east of Moscow to find stories about fascinating characters who like to keep to themselves.

Ron Rosenbaum, an Esquire veteran who specializes in literary journalism, makes a pilgrimage to the Great Sphinx of American fiction, J. D. Salinger, who inexplicably has just authorized the publication of a novella last seen in The New Yorker in 1965. (As a young writer at the New York Post in the early 1960s, I tried the same story. I didn't snag Salinger, but I did uncover a Phoebe Weatherfield Caulfield-style interview done with him by a Vermont high school girl-my one contribution to modern American literary history.)

Frank Rose pursues another enigmatic character, Edgar Bronfman Jr., the Seagram heir who's bet the family business on making Universal an entertainment powerhouse again. And Guy Martin talks his way into a visit with the man who revolutionized modern warfare, former Soviet major general Mikhail Kalashnikov, whose indestructible, ubiquitous AK-47 assault weapon has turned Third World guerrillas into masters of destruction.

For an unblinking assessment of the most powerful man in the world, Esquire turns to Paul Johnson, the British journalist and

historian whose Modern Times is a brilliant chronicle of our age. Is Bill Clinton the greatest rogue ever to live in the White House? Johnson thinks he is-but also believes the president still has a chance to redeem himself.

Bill Zehme is Esquire's own king of comedy. He's profiled Seinfeld and Woody Allen, Letterman and Leno. This month, Zehme

plunks himself on the couch, not for a Freudian frisson, but for some on-the-job prepping as a second banana for his exploration of "The Sidekick Inside Me." Bill chose a cable Johnny, Charles Grodin, whose nightly talkfest runs on CNBC. But Zehme was able to gather stooge secrets from the legendary Ed McMahon, Regis Philbin, Hugh Downs, and rookie of the year Andy Richter—plus fifteen minutes of face time with the dour Grodin.

From the front of the magazine to the back, Esquire's most popular sections have been refocused. Jeannette Walls's streamlined Reality Check has more of an insider's newsletter feel. Esky is a guide to popular culture. And the Male Animal, our service section, has grown to twenty pages, covering health, fitness, psychology, sex, relationships, careers, personal finance, cars, food, wine, and travel-the syllabus of modern life.

My favorite aspect of this latest Esquire is its clean, vibrant design.

The new look is the vision of one of America's paramount graphic designers, Robert Priest. This is Priest's second tour at the magazine (after stints at Newsweek, Us, GQ, and House & Garden). As art director here from 1979 to 1983, Robert introduced a refined but resonant design that was hugely influential-as this one is certain to be.



Kosner: Pleasure from the best writers.

These changes in the content and look of Esquire have a single purpose-to make the magazine better respond to our readers' clear desire for penetrating journalism about the major figures of our time in the arts, politics, business, and sports; for memorable fiction; and for impeccable guidance on how to take care of their bodies, their careers, relationships, wardrobes, and their souls. That was Esquire's mission from the first issue in October 1933, and it remains Esquire's mission today. 12

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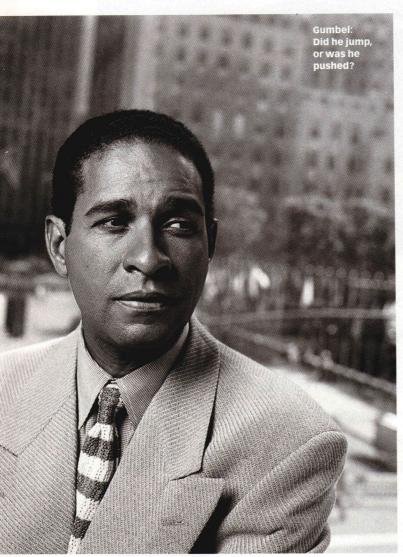
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DEAD IN SHOW BUSINESS

Even though he's a former agent, Michael Ovitz knows a little something about sentiment in Hollywood. When Ovitz attended the funeral of Disney president Frank Wells in April 1994, he wasn't overly impressed by the turnout of five thousand mourners, according to Robert Slater's biography

of Ovitz, published by McGraw-Hill. Ovitz, who recently opened his golden parachute and left Disney, turned to his wife, Judy, and said, "If I died tomorrow, there'd be twenty-five thousand people at my funeral . . . because everyone would want to know that I was dead."

GUMBEL'S GAMBOL

BRYANT GUMBEL'S \$25 million package from CBS was certainly a wise choice for the former Today-show host-especially if you believe sources who say that Gumbel was edged out of his seat anyway. Several insiders say Gumbel was told by NBC that he was being taken off Today. One reason, sources say, is that Matt Lauer, who replaced Gumbel, tested "extraordinarily well" with audiences. Another reason, the sources add, is that Gumbel frequently clashed with NBC News president Andrew Lack. "They had a huge falling-out," says one insider. "They were always fighting."

"This isn't an All About Adam situation," says another source. "Gumbel and Lauer are friends and get along well. The decision was made at the top."

Gumbel's agent, Ed Hookstratten, denies that there was any rift with Lack. "There were some differences, and they used to argue with each other," says Hookstratten. "That kind of thing is common in the business. . . . I don't know where these rumors get started. Somebody probably heard them going at it and said, 'Oh, they don't get along.' But they have tremendous respect for each other."

"There's no point in speculating about what happened in the past," says an NBC spokeswoman. "Bryant signed with CBS, and we wish him all the best."

As for reports that Gumbel was told 1996 would be his last year, Hookstratten says that "it was suggested" to Gumbel that he "do other things. He's not Johnny Carson. He didn't want to hang around for thirty years.'

O. J. RUNS A REVERSE

THE SULTAN of Brunei may have an unusual addition to his harem.

A source close to O. J. Simpson says the world's richest man has told the former legal client of the century that he will help with Simpson's huge debtincluding the \$33.5 million he owes to the families of Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman-if O. J. will consider converting to Islam. The Sultan is worth an

estimated \$40 billion.

A spokesman for the Sultan calls the story "total poppycock." Simpson did not return phone calls.

"Some people may think that because of his scandal-scarred reputation, the Sultan might not embrace him," says another source. "But his public conversion to Islam would be great PR. Besides, if it worked for Mike Tyson . . . "

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THE PLANE TRUTH

Does al gore have a fear of flying with reporters? Sources are saying that Gore's recent cancellation of his press plane on his trip to Asia reflects a strained relationship with the media.

The consensus among several reporters is that Gore was trying to limit his coverage. Only ten reporters were selected to fly with the vice-president aboard Air Force Two; the rest had to fly commercially. Toughminded New York Times columnist Maureen Dowd was among the journalists bumped from the press plane, but she says it "would be narcissistic" to think that such elaborate measures were taken to keep her at bay. But, adds Dowd, she did notice that Gore, although quite pleasant to her, kept very close tabs on what was being written about him. "The Asia trip was very important to Gore," she says. "He was reading everything from pool reports to first editions to wire reports. . . . He was ballistic about some of the things written about him, and there was clearly a heightened sensitivity to what was being said."

"The vice-president didn't cancel the [press] plane," says his spokeswoman. "The travel office did." She says the reason for the cancellation was a 60 Minutes exposé about the scheduled carrier's safety problems. (Ironically, the primary source of the report was former Department of Transportation inspector general Mary Schiavo, who has accused the government of ignoring her warnings about airline safety.) Gore's spokeswoman says that arranging for another plane "proved to be prohibitively expensive" for the news organizations.

The cost factor has sparked skepticism among some reporters. "They didn't ask us if it was too expensive for us," says one. "They told us."



FATAL BEAUTY **BOOK**

LARRY SCHILLER'S book on children's beauty pageants may have come to a tragic end. Inspired by the JonBenet Ramsey case, Schiller—the coauthor, with O. J. Simpson, of I Want to Tell You who later wrote his own insider's account of the criminal trial, American Tragedy-had an agreement to write the beauty-pageant book for Random House.

The advance was said to have been \$850,000. But, a source says, Random House chairman Alberto Vitale overrode Schiller's editor, Jason Epstein, and put the kibosh on the book. "Some of us at Random House thought it was too expensive and too tabloidy," says an insider.

This is not the first time Vitale has second-guessed one

of his editors. Earlier this year, he exercised his veto power and killed a book on airline safety whose author had been advanced more than half a million dollars.

Epstein's office said, "I don't believe we'll be bringing out that book" and directed calls to Schiller, who denies the story. "I'm researching it right now," he says. "I have had no disagreements with my editor, and the last time I heard from Vitale, he sent me Baccarat crystal."

GIVING CULTS A GOOD NAME

A FORMER cult-bashing organization is now doing PR for some sects. Shortly after the Heaven's Gate mass suicide, the Cult Awareness Network, which has long battled cults, sent reporters a list of "experts" on the subject. One of them, J. Gordon Melton, is considered by many cult foes to be an apologist for the groups.

Melton, who has written extensively on cults and religions, has come out in defense of Aum, the Japanese cult linked to the gassing of a Tokyo subway in March 1995 that killed twelve people, and the Church of Scientology has asked him to testify in court on its behalf. What's more, Melton, whom CAN identified as

"executive director, Institute for the Study of American Religions, University of California, Santa Barbara," is not a professor at the school; he works in the library.

Why would CAN list someone known to be sympathetic to these groups? "We have a different philosophy here now," says Isadore Chait, CAN's new

director. "We're an information source on religions." He adds that Melton has written "the authoritative book on religions in America."

Chait was appointed after CAN lost a recent lawsuit, went bankrupt, and saw its name, logo, and hot line bought by a Scientologist.

'We figured this would happen," says a source. "The foxes are guarding the henhouse."

A M E R I C A N S T Y L E



The Button-Down

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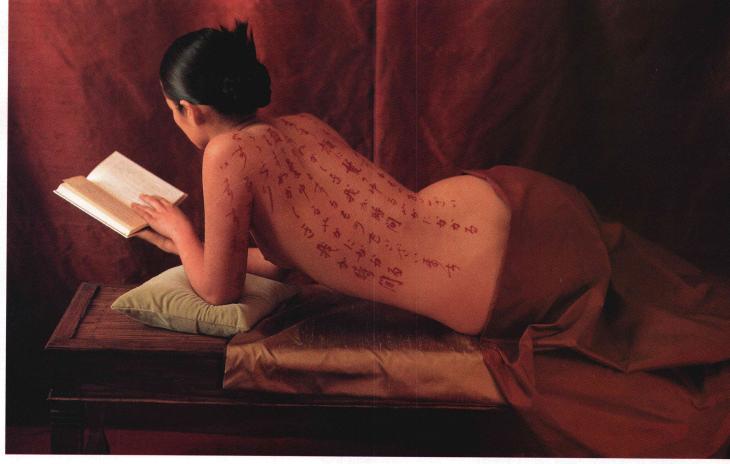






This month: A look at the mad poets of the legal profession, a meditation on Gwen Stefani's navel. and, for Father's Day, Pizzarelli figlio e padre.





The Movie Nude Calligraphy

English director peter greenaway, our own movie columnist David Thomson has written, "is a test case in the question as to whether cinema can really be as solitary as art or literature." With Greenaway's latest, The Pillow Book, which opens this month, the question remainswhich means that he's made another breathtakingly gorgeous and completely absorbing but still coldly odd and opaque film (not unlike its predecessors The Cook, the Thief, His Wife & Her Lover; Prospero's Books; Drowning by Numbers). This time, his tale combines sex, calligraphy, romance, filial passion, acres of skin, and revenge in a twisty plot of near-Shakespearean tragedy-but with some laughs, too, more than usual.

The Miniseries How to Steal a River

THANKS TO CHINATOWN, WE know in a vaguely cinematic way that Los Angeles exists only because enough water was success
to keep the parched desert metropdocumentary Cadillac Desert: Water and the Transformation of Nature,

the actual heist-of an entire river, and that's just for starters-is shown in all its clever, manifestdestiny-charged detail. The minisaga, which premieres on PBS on June 24, is based mostly on Marc Reisner's excellent 1986 book of the same title.

The Book Hunter S. Thompson, Man of Letters

"GODDAMMIT, Hills, I don't think there's an excuse in the world for you people holding onto my manuscript this long. . . . " In The Proud Highway: The Fear and Loathing Letters, Volume I (Villard), this 1959 rocket, sent by Hunter S. Thompson to an innocent Esquire editor, is but part of an intimate look at the formation of a dangerous mind in an extravagant time. These letters, compiled by Thompson himself, start in 1955 and end in 1967 and are as good an anecdotal history as mail can provide; recipients include LBJ, the NRA, and novelist and former newspaper editor William J. Kennedy, whose teeth Thompson threatened to kick in-though that didn't stop Kennedy from writing the foreword to this fat (six-hundred-plus-page) collection.

Music Reasonable Doubt

BY MARK JACOBSON

LA GUERRE EST FINIE. The telephone war, at least. I (the parent) have lost to them (the children). They'll get their own line. La guerre apropos le CD player rages on. Not that they don't already have their own machines. This is a battle of taste. Proclaiming a sort of peasant democracy, they (ages seven, ten, and fourteen) say that if I insist that repeated playing of Charlie Parker's Scrapple from the Apple is "for your own good," then I should listen to their music, for my own good.

For some reason, likely owing to flawed Dr. Spock-liberal thinking, I agreed to this deal. They have given me assignments. Currently, I'm slogging through No Doubt, pseudo ska rockers from Anaheim, California, whose CD Tragic Kingdom (Trauma) sits astride the charts like a ripe and drippy tomato. This one was more or less my fault; I was a victim of my own prurience. Lead singer Gwen Stefani's flashing belly button caught my eye as we watched the Grammy broadcast, and I was dumb enough to ask, "Who's that?"

To assuage this ignorance, my older daughter, the fashion leader, tossed a YM magazine my way, bidding me to bone up. YM is no Tiger Beat, but the article did provide the following facts:

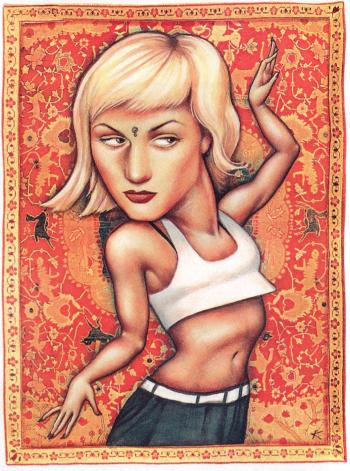
The twenty-seven-year-old Gwen, who worries about her weight and thinks of herself as a "big slob" afflicted with "bad style" in high school, used to go out with Tony, the bass player, who was her prom date, but Gwen got dumped and is now dating Gavin Rossdale, the lead singer of Bush, a hideous British MTV band even my kids stopped liking a few months ago, thankfully.

Listening to No Doubt is tolerable. They've got some hooks, and Gwen Stefani (did she change her name from Stephani, for Sesame Street e-z-spelling sake?) sings only about four **Lead singer Gwen** levels worse than Cyndi

Lauper. "But this stuff is kind of derivative, isn't it?" I mentioned to my daughter, who returned one of those exasperated here-comes-the-lecture

teen looks.

"Derivative . . . sounds like something-everything-else." I put on a few old Devo cuts (remember those stupid hats?), which the kids



had to admit sounded suspiciously similar to No Doubt's "Just a Girl." Skipping over the dreary Foreigneresque ballad "Don't Speak,"

Stefani's belly button

caught my eye as we

watched the Grammys,

and I was dumb enough

to ask, "Who's that?"

I delineated the roots of the ska-like "Spiderwebs," easily No Doubt's best song.

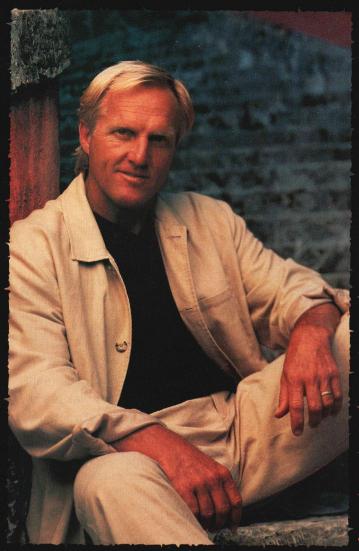
"Hear that beat?" I asked as unpedagogically as possible, playing a few numbers made by the invincible Skatalites

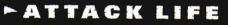
in Kingston during the early 1960s. The Skatalites weren't up to No Doubt, but they didn't suck, the kids decided. They liked the trombone player, mostly. "That's Don Drummond," I dutifully imparted. "He's usually thought of as the father of ska. A great musician."

"Yeah?" they said. "What's he done lately?

"Well, he's dead," I replied to a dumbstruck audience. "He killed his girlfriend and wound up in a mental institution." That did it. They picked up their No Doubt CD and left. Didn't I know music was supposed to be fun?

Just as consumer pressure is pushing the price of compact discs downward, along comes Hollywood-based Classic Compact Discs (800-457-2577) trying to make them elitist (read: expensive) again. But audiophiles aren't complaining, since the company is concentrating only on reissuing rare sonic gems of the LP erabargains at twenty-five dollars a pop. Most exciting is Witches' Brew, a devilish collection of orchestral works by Mussorgsky, Liszt, and others, performed by the New Symphony Orchestra of London, conducted by Alexander Gibson. Other releases include Mendelssohn's Scotch Symphony, conducted by Ataulfo Argenta, Harry Belafonte's Belafonte Sings the Blues, Charlie Mingus's Tijuana Moods, and Sonny Rollins's Our Man in Jazz. -RAYMOND TUTTLE

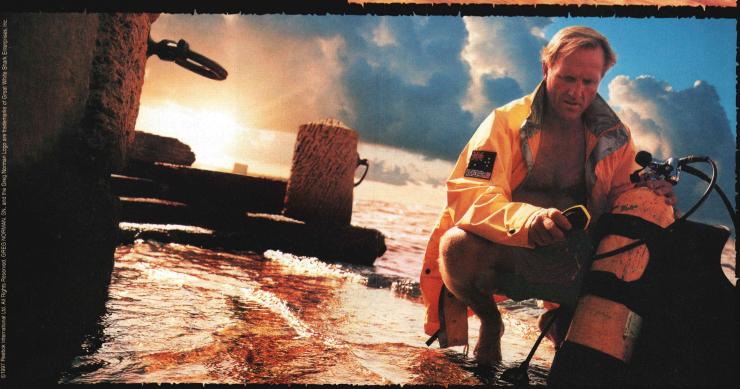






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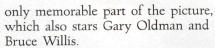


Our Kind of Woman Milla Jovovich

"Dude-you don't even know," says twenty-one-year-old Milla Jovovich about her approach to acting. "It's all about making mistakes. It's not like I'm Jodie Foster or Meryl Streep. I'm just Milla. To be able to make a mistake is the most wonderful thing in the world. To have no fear-to do whatever. You fall in the

mud, and you take a shower and you do it all over again."

Her latest error may be Luc Besson's dubious sci-fi extravaganza, The Fifth Element, just out. Take it from us: Milla's scantily clad, very human-looking alien is the



Still, her career would appear to be the product of a painstaking strategy aimed at total world dominationor at least at her being a princess of all media, if you will. Witness: At eleven, she was on the cover of Seventeen magazine; at twelve, she was photographed by Richard Avedon as one of Revlon's "Most Unforgettable Women in the World"; and at nineteen she became a Calvin Klein Escape girl. In 1991, at fifteen, Milla made a doe-eyed scramble through Return to the Blue Lagoon; her more recent blink-and-you-missed-it movie moments were in Richard Attenborough's Chaplin and Richard

Linklater's Dazed and Confused. Three years ago, she released (to surprise acclaim) The Divine Com-

"I had this dream that I was really, really attracted to Courtney Love."

edy, a recording of synth-pop, poetry, and folk, all written and sung by Milla, under the obvious and admitted influence of Kate Bush. (She describes her new songs, currently being recorded for release next winter, as "a cross between hardcore rock and Frank Sinatra.")

What seems to make her wax most lyrical is her childhood, the first five years of which were spent in Ukraine: "I remember slugs, slipping on the pavement, icicles and playgrounds, colors and winter, having my hair braided by my grandmother. And setting fire to the apartment."

But today, the erstwhile budding pyromaniac is smoldering in a crowded bistro. She points to a handsome crew of trendies a few tables away. "That's my boyfriend, Mario," she says, then leans in conspiratorially. "He doesn't know this, but I had this recurring dream when I was younger that I was really, really attracted to Courtney Love. I just thought she was so beautiful. Man, I had so many dreams about her." She smiles hugely and waves at her Mario. -WILLIAM GEORGIADES





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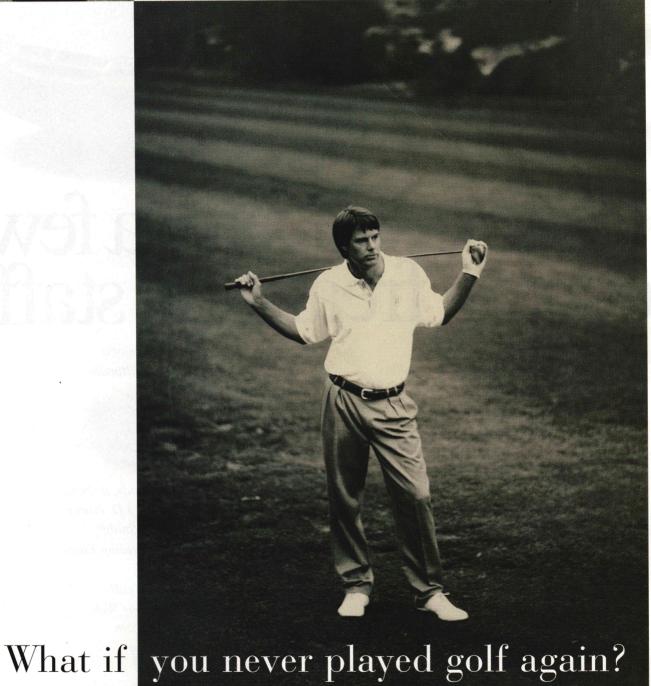
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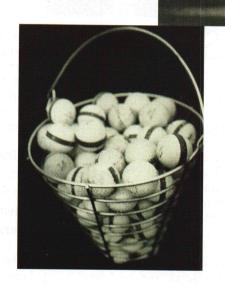
You'd miss the queasy feeling you get on the first tee.

You'd even miss the breeze in your face.

You'd miss finding old scorecards in a forgotten pocket of your bag.

You'd miss your lucky shirt.

You'd miss your putter (more than your driver).



You'd miss the 470 yard Par 4's.

You'd miss the competition.

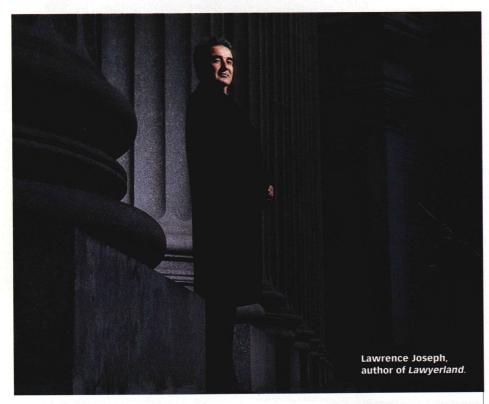
You'd miss your buddies, especially the guy who owes you \$75.

You'd even miss making doublebogey every now and then.

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Paul Azinger, Haggar tour professional





Books Court and Spark

BY PHILLIP LOPATE

WE MAY TELL the nastiest jokes about lawyers, but America, the most litigious society in history, can barely turn a doorknob without consulting an attorney-which suggests at least some (fatal) attraction to the beast. This love-hate dependency is at the heart of Lawrence Joseph's gripping Lawyerland (Farrar, Straus and Giroux).

The author, himself a lawyer, has hung out with confreres, gotten them to talk, and streamlined their remarks into charged, often hilarious, always dramatic monologues and dialogues. The speakers are pumped up, competitive, articulate beyond belief; their words seem to geyser up, spilling over from the more inhibiting courthouse, where rules of evidence circumscribe discourse.

Joseph's book defies categoryit is part anthropological report, part performance piece. His lawyers are first cousins to David Mamet's or Eric Bogosian's ranters. Listen to one such screed:

"Do you know what fucking amazes me?... How little anyone who isn't a lawyer really knows about what comes down. I am simply fucking amazed. They all watch their lawyer TV shows,

read these shitty legal thrillers. Like it's one big, suspenseful, meaningful endeavor-this mystery with a hidden truth revealed at the end of the final chapter.

They hate lawyers more than anyone else in the world-but law? Law! They love the fucking law! You see it in jurors' faces-even the most sophisticated and street-smart. They're not only intrigued—they're

impressed! Reasonable doubt—they go fucking bananas! Just say the words and their eyes change."

The author is both a law professor and an accomplished poet. Also, being an Arab American Catholic from Detroit, he comes across as the quintessential outsider trying to understand everything, out of both wariness and Whitmanesque appetite.

A conscientious effort has been made to represent the whole spectrum of law-criminal, medical malpractice, employee relations, corporate finance, real estate—and a range of ages, ethnicities, and genders. Still, these are all essentially members of the same tribe: sarcastic, edgy New York attorneys. At times, they seem insufficiently differentiated, splinters of the author's own expansive, splenetic sensibility. But when they come alive on the page, they do so with a furious vitality.

A high point is the confrontation between one lawyer, Martha, who defends employees from unfair termination and sexual harassment, and her corporate nemesis, Robert, who works for firms trying to "downsize." Though the author's sympathies are clearly more with

the downtrodden than with the bottom-line CEOs, it is a measure of Joseph's dramatic instincts that he allows his corporate spokesman the final word: "Everything is up for

grabs, Martha, and no one even knows what he-or she, or she, Martha—is grabbing." Before this vision of a cosmos heading for chaos and sleekness, Joseph can only shake his head in wonderment.

prose poem, the lawyers are first cousins to David Mamet's ranters.

In Joseph's courthouse



If you've ever searched the annals of art history to find out who painted those rec-room masterpieces of dogs playing poker, you can now turn to Todd and Brant von Hoffmann's Big Damn Book of Sheer Manliness. Just out from the General Publishing Group, this testosteronic tome is an encyclopedia of all masculine interests, from Weber grills to Mack trucks to the Baja 500, including the story of Cassius "Cash" Coolidge, a nineteenth-century carnival-poster painter and -DEVIN FRIEDMAN the Picasso of poker-playing dogs.





Our Kind of Guys John and Bucky Pizzarelli

"THERE'S NOT A LOT of guys around playing and singing standards with drumless trios," deadpans John Pizzarelli over an early-morning coffee at New York's Broadway Diner.

True enough—his career choice was probably equal parts nature and nurture. His dad, Bucky Pizzarelli, is a master of the jazz guitar who has worked with Frank Sinatra and Benny Goodman; Bucky made a habit of throwing swinging soirees at their Saddle River, New Jersey, home, where the likes of Joe Pass, Les Paul, and Zoot Sims would drop by for pasta, drinks, and laughs. And music. "What interested me most about

John watched Bucky and his pals "hanging out, telling stories. I wanted to be a part of that."

these guys," says John, who's thirty-seven, "was that they were such great musicians, but they

were also great people and would have such a good time just hanging out, telling stories, and playing music. I wanted to be a part of that.'

His latest album—Our Love Is Here to Stay (RCA), his seventh in two years—features his trio, including younger brother Martin on bass and Ray Kennedy on piano, with a guest appearance by Dad, all backed by a big-band orchestra. In April, Pizzarelli began an eight-month stint on Broadway at the Royale Theater, starring in Dream, a musical based on the lyrics of Johnny Mercer, whose songs are right up his Tin Pan Alley.

Although he took banjo lessons with his great-uncle at age six before switching to guitar four years later, it wasn't until he was twenty, when he heard the drumless Nat King Cole Trio for the first time, that inspiration hit. "That's when I said, 'This can be my niche. This is something I can do.''

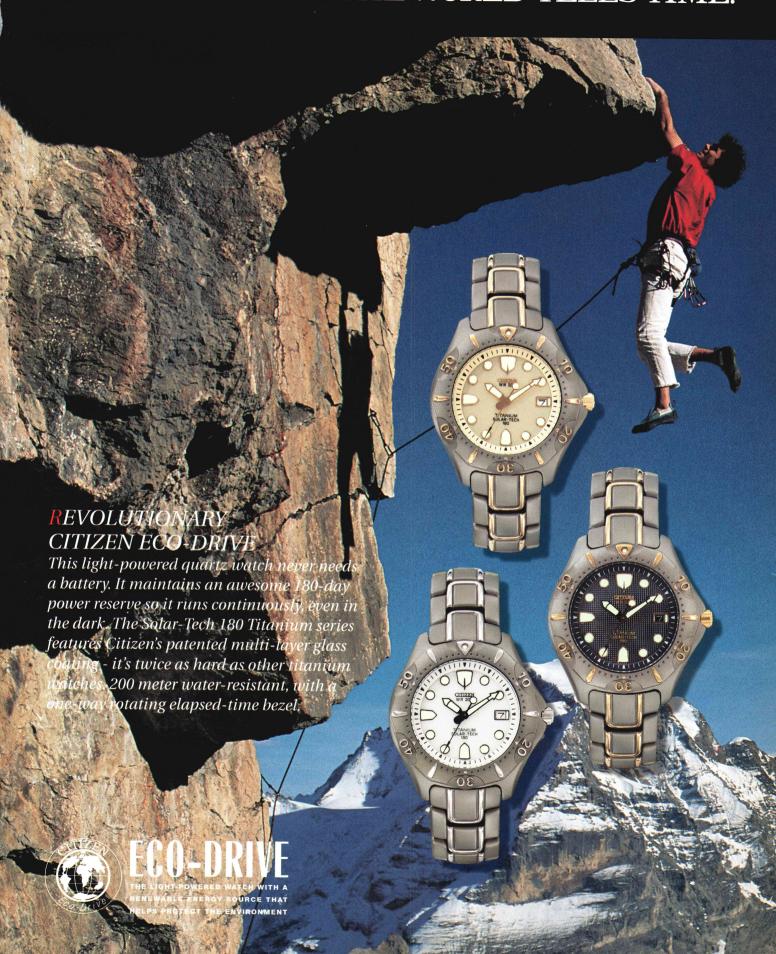
John Pizzarelli never sought to rebel against his father's music-the closest he ever came to that generational rite of passage was tossing off a few licks from "Stairway to Heaven" and "Smoke on the Water" in the middle of a Jerome Kern tune. Even in the late eighties, when he fronted a rock band called Johnny Pick and His Scabs, jazz was always on his mind; the band's regular weekend gigs were

at a club across the street from New York's fabled Sweet Basil.

Like his dad, who was content to come home from a tour of Europe to play in the living room of onetime neighbor Richard M. Nixon, Pizzarelli just wants to play his custom-made seven-string guitar. (The seventh is a low A.) "I've never done anything else," he says, sipping his coffee, "unless you count being a camp counselor. . . . I can't believe I make a living at -Joseph V. Tirella what I do."



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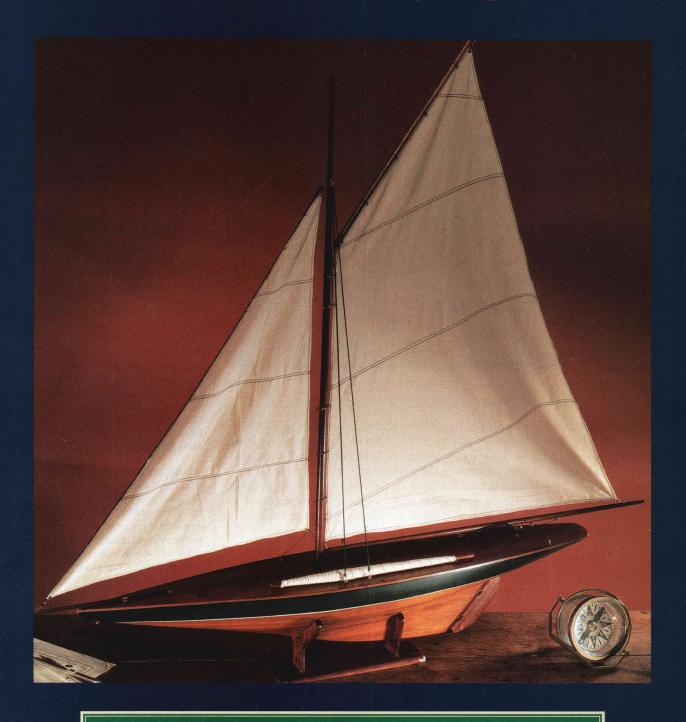
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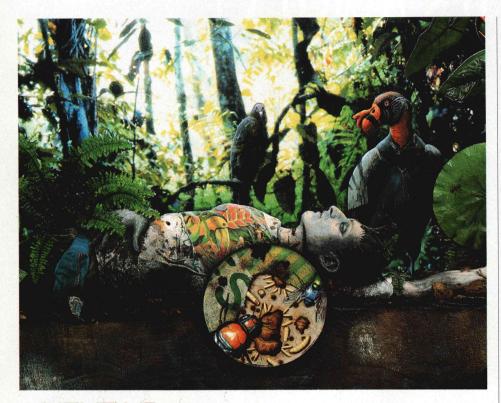
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NEXT UP WHAT A FEW OF OUR FAVORITE CULTURAL FIGURES ARE UP TO

Alexis Rockman: The artist's latest gallery exhibit, which includes The Eco-tourist (detail above), will be on display in New York's Jay Gorney Modern Art through the end of June. He's also working on three books with paleontologists and is shopping around a treatment he's written for a science-fiction movie. "It's about a devastated natural world with the only remains in geodesic domes that mimic the integrity of geographic sites—an obviously expensive cinematic situation." Rockman's one-man show at Houston's Contemporary Arts Museum will run from November 21, 1997, through January 11, 1998.

Mario Vargas Llosa: The Peruvian author is starting a new novel (tentatively titled The Feast of the Goat) that takes place in the Dominican Republic during the last months of the Trujillo dictatorship in 1961. "He was a megalomaniac," Llosa recalls. "He was corrupt and brutal, but he really thought he was doing good for his country. In that way, he was similar to Castro." Another novel, The Notebooks of Don Rigoberto, is being translated into English and will be published by Farrar, Straus and Giroux in 1998. A book of Llosa's essays, Making Waves, will be out in July, also from FSG.

Charles Burnett: The director of To Sleep with Anger and, most recently, Nightjohn is preparing to film An Annihilation of Fish (which is likely to star Danny Glover and Anne Bancroft), about two "eccentric outsiders who disrupt each other's illusions." He's also working on two documentaries, one about Korean comfort women during World War II and the other on homelessness in L. A.

Ornette Coleman: The jazz avant-gardist is finishing a new album, Johnny Dolphin, which will feature various ethnic vocalists and will be released later this year by Verve/Harmolodic. He is also composing new music for his ensemble. "Civilization," a celebratory retrospective of his work, will be performed at Lincoln Center in July. -MICHAEL J. AGOVINO

TONY HENDRA'S **MILLSTONES**

OUTED: Shock jock Howard Stern, by his wife of nineteen years, Alison, who admitted that her husband is a transsexual. Describing herself as "Howie's longtime beard," Mrs. Stern said the success of Private Parts has made the announcement inevitable. "The naked buttocks in the first sequence, the cross-dressing, the hair, the obsession with gay sex, the effeminate walk-the whole movie was Howie's cry for help: 'Out me, America.' "Stern himself expressed relief: "See, I don't have to pretend to be worried anymore about being hung like an acorn. It's not a tiny penis that I have—it's a huge clitoris."

SUED: Book publisher Scribner, by Oprah Winfrey, after Oprah's Book Club selected Ursula Hegi's Stones from the River, an inventive novel about life in Nazi Germany as seen through the eyes of a dwarf woman. Winfrey claims that no one at Scribner bothered to tell her about an inventive novel called The Tin Drum, by Günter Grass, about life in Nazi Germany as seen through the eyes of a dwarf boy.

PROMOTED: Major General Claudia Kennedy, to three-star general. Kennedy, who has been at the forefront of efforts to civilize the Army and make it less hostile to women, announced sweeping new rules of behavior for rank and file, symbolized by the altered Army slogan: "Be as nice as you can be." General Kennedy has ordered that these rules extend even into combat, requiring infantrymen to address enemies politely before engaging them, as in "Excuse me. Mr. Abdul. sir. would vou mind terribly if I blew your nuts off?"

DIAGNOSED: Sarah Ferguson, Duchess of York, with an advanced case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy, or mad-cow disease, after she approached Sotheby's to auction off her two children, Beatrice and Eugenie. "Her Majesty regards this as a mixed blessing," says a Palace spokesman, explaining that since it is almost impossible to diagnose the disease in the English upper classes. "members of the Royal Family may be similarly afflicted. Prince Charles has been known to froth and lurch."

WHO ME?



Season in the Sun

After jumping ship from the Pirates, Jim Leyland is swimming in success with the Marlins

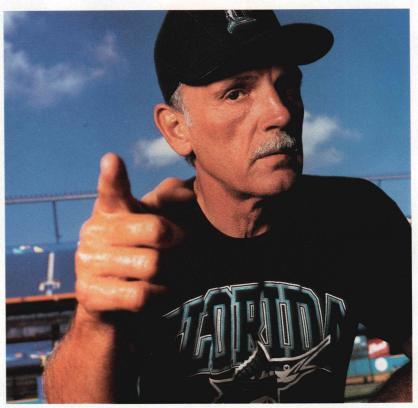
IT WAS LATE, and the clubhouse door had been shut for a long time. This was the time of night, especially given newspaper deadlines, when you kept waiting for the sportswriters in this dark corner of Atlanta Fulton County Stadium to kick that door in. It was October 14, 1992. The Braves had just won the pennant over the Pittsburgh Pirates in the bottom of the ninth inning of the seventh game, the bottom of the whole National League season.

The Pirates had the lead, with three outs to go. Then an unknown pinch hitter named Francisco Cabrera lined a single to left off a reliever named Stan Belinda. David Justice scored from third, and Sid Bream—running on ruined knees—somehow beat Barry Bonds's throw to the plate.

Now we were waiting for Jim Leyland, the Pirates' manager, to open his clubhouse door and talk about it. Someone once said that the best stories are in the losers' locker room. We all knew there was a story on the other side of the door—if we could ever get in there.

"It was like something out of your Little League memories," Jim Leyland says now in his office at Pro Player Stadium in Miami. "The team on one side jumping up and down, all happy because they won. The other side crying. Some things in this game never change."

Finally, the clubhouse door opened. I was at the front of the line. There was Leyland. His eyes were red. His usually cigaretteravaged voice, as sweet as the sound of an old lawn mower, was



Professor Leyland: "Take the job seriously, but don't take yourself seriously."

more of a wreck than usual.

"Guys," Leyland said, "I'm gonna need a few more minutes here."

Nobody in back of me bitched. We always root for the best nights in sports, the best games, the best finishes. There was one of those going on about a hundred yards up the runway. But down here, in Leyland's room, in Leyland's voice, on his face, was one of the worst.

"When you win, the players get to be the spokesmen," Leyland said. "When you lose, that's the manager's job."

Now it is five years later, and the fifty-two-year-old Leyland is managing the Florida Marlins. He has the horses again and H. Wayne Huizenga's Blockbuster Video money behind him and a fresh start toward the World Series he never made with the Pirates. I tell Leyland how well he handled himself that night in Atlanta.

"I didn't do anything besides what I'm supposed to do in that situation," Leyland says. "We get paid a lot of money to act like big boys."

All this time later, he keeps giving you more and more reasons to root for him. Root for this to be the season when Jim Leyland finally gets by the Atlanta Braves.

THE MARLINS HAVE never been much of an attraction in south Florida, lagging behind somewhere between hockey's Panthers and a vigorous game of shuffleboard. When they signed Jim Leyland at the end of last season, they didn't exactly offer him Albert Belle money. The White Sox pay Belle more for a single season than Leyland will make during the length of his five-year contract to manage the Marlins. But Leyland was as big a hire, if not as dramatic.

"Jim Leyland," says Dave Dombrowski, the Marlins' general manager, "was the guy I wanted from the first minute he announced he was leaving

the Pirates."

"When I knew he was going to Florida, I knew that's where I wanted to be," says Bobby Bonilla, who signed with the Marlins in the off-season to rejoin his old Pirates skipper. "He's the best around.... I hope I finish my

career playing for him."

This winter, Huizenga and Dombrowski set out to change not just the perception of their four-year-old franchise but everything about it. Dombrowski signed free-agent pitcher Alex Fernandez, a Miami kid, for \$35 million and Moises Alou for \$25 million and Bonilla for \$23 million. Blockbuster deals all around.

Leyland has never thought of himself as a star; he rode too many minorleague buses to think that. He still doesn't think of himself as some kind of hot property, even though he had the White Sox, Red Sox, and Angels fighting over him like people trying to grab a seat in the last lifeboat off the Titanic.

"I'm a shit ballplayer from a small town [Perrysburg, Ohio]," Leyland says. "I've already gotten more out of this game than I thought I ever would." He pauses and then says, "If somebody had told me when I was twelve years old that I'd have the life in baseball I've had, I would've told him he was out of his frigging mind."

The voice doesn't change, even though Leyland has quit smokes from time to time-before going back on them. Neither does the gaunt, midnight face. Leyland says he has a policy that he never takes a tough loss home with him. He leaves it in his office. But sometimes he does not leave that office until two in the morning.

"I don't bullshit my players, and I

don't bullshit other people," says one of the few true players' managers. "I'm certainly not going to bullshit myself. I wake up every morning thinking I'm lucky to have a job like this. I tell people all the time I'm never gonna be one of those guys who complain about the bus being late. Hell, there were times when I drove the goddamned bus.

"I think I get along good with my players, don't get me wrong," he says. "But I'm also smart enough

"People tell me I've

got it made now,"

Leyland says of his

move to the Marlins.

"A lot of people

seem to have it

made before you

have to play the

frigging season."

to know that the day they decide they don't want me, I'm gone. It's that fucking simple."

He really did drive the bus one time in the minors, when he was beginning to make his name as a manager. He started young—a shit catcher giving up his bigleague dreams earlybefore he finally made it to the third-base coaching box when Tony LaRussa was managing the White

Sox. But Leyland never minded the small towns, never minded putting

in the time.

From the minor-league buses to being a few outs from the World Series with the Pirates. Suddenly, even without a Series ring, Leyland was discussed with the great managers of the game, with LaRussa and Tommy Lasorda, Whitey Herzog and Sparky Anderson. Now he is in south Florida at a time when other glamour boys-like Jimmy Johnson and Pat Riley—have also migrated there. Riley and Johnson have bigger profiles, bigger portfolios. But Leyland is playing in the same league, with the same stakes, and everybody knows it.

"Listen," he says. "If I told you that I wasn't proud and flattered by the opinion people seem to have of me, I'd be lying to you. But there's a saying I've always gone by, and it may sound corny, but here it is: Take the job seriously, but don't take yourself seriously. Because all of this shit can be very fast

and fleeting."

It was that way in Pittsburgh. He would have stayed forever, but after watching the Pirates sell off every valuable player on the roster, Leyland knew it was time to move on. He could have picked any of the other teams that wanted him. He rejected the Angels because Anaheim was too far away for a midwestern boy. He probably could have gotten more money from the White Sox or the Red Sox if he'd wanted to play the whole thing out. But he knew Dombrowski from his White Sox days. And he liked the youth

and talent in Florida, and he liked knowing that Wayne Huizenga would reach into his deep pockets to win.

They had a young catcher [Charles Johnson] here, they had kids at second and short [Luis Castillo, Edgar Renteria], they had Gary Sheffield and Kevin Brown and Al Leiter," he says. "The nucleus was right there. And I knew that on top of that, I was getting into a situation that if they wanted to keep

these guys, they could afford to."

And he was right. Even after all the winter shopping, Huizenga and Dombrowski still weren't through. After the season began, the Marlins also announced that Sheffield-a Triple Crown candidate every season-had signed a six-year contract extension for \$61 million. Belle money at last. Jimmy Leyland was back in play.

Once Leyland had the job in Florida last winter, once Wayne Huizenga started throwing money around, Joe Torre, Yankee manager, called Jim up

on the telephone.

"Could you just set aside twelve tickets behind the dugout for the World Series?" Torre said. Leyland laughed and cursed him out in tapemeasure fashion.

"People tell me I've got it made now," Leyland says. "A lot of people seem to have it made before you have

to play the frigging season."

But after all the gloom in Pittsburgh the last couple of years, losing all those games after winning so many there, at least the frigging thing feels like a season in the sun again.

JIM LEYLAND DOES not tell stories and get laughs the way Lasorda always did. He is not the kind of colorful character actor that Sparky Anderson always was. But he is as powerful an advertisement for what is still right with baseball, as articulate a spokesman for the game's values and traditions and beauty, as anyone. Leyland doesn't believe baseball will be brought back by some new marketing campaign or a deal with some self-promoting sneaker company, or by slogans or begging the fans' forgiveness. Levland believes that baseball-played hard, played at a high level—will save baseball.

"You know what I tell my ballplayers when we talk about bringing baseball back? I tell them to be decent human beings. I tell them to go out every day and perform to the best of their abilities and sometimes beyond. And I tell 'em to sign an autograph once in a while and make a kid smile. That's what will bring baseball back."

He says it was not as hard in Pittsburgh the last couple of seasons as people made it out to be, even if he hated—hated—coming into a season knowing he had no chance to win.

"But I never lost the capacity to take a step back," Leyland says, "and see something happen on the field, something great, and just say, 'Holy shit.' "

Suddenly, he remembers a night last season when he was losing late in a

game against the Braves.

"I'm down a run in the ninth, which means that Bobby Cox [the Braves' manager is coming in with Mark Wohlers to close us down. So here comes Wohlers out of the bull pen, and I've had Dave Clark sitting next to me all night long, and I tell him I'm sending him up to pinch-hit. So I'm sending him out there cold to swing against a guy who throws a hundred miles per hour. Clark takes his practice swings in the ondeck circle, Wohlers finishes his warmup pitches. Okay? We're ready to go. And the first pitch Mark Wohlers throws on this night, according to our gun, is 102 miles per hour. One-oh-two.

"Clark hits the son of a bitch over the center-field fence."

Another pause.

"You don't think this is the greatest game in the world?" Jim Leyland says. 12

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Heaven Couldn't Wait

Trade aliens for angels and the thirty-nine suicide cultists could be mistaken for Christian saints

RANCHO SANTA FE, the Reverend Paul Nelson joked on Easter morning, is such an earthly paradise that when one of the town's citizens went to heaven after dying, he looked around and said, "This

is nice, but can I go home on weekends?"

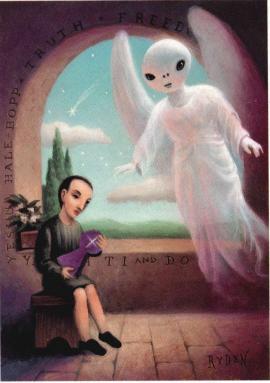
It was a gentle, soothing, even mildly self-congratulatory joke, but on this Sunday morning, four days after the bodies of the Heaven's Gate cultists had been found a scant three miles away-a period of unending macabre discoveries and embarrassing media invasion-the people attending the reverend's service in Rancho Santa Fe's Presbyterian church were in need of some comic relief. They chuckled appreciatively.

But humor, the reverend made clear, was not to be the predominant tone of the service. And so, surrounded by a choir whose purple robes were uncannily similar in color to the death shrouds of the cultists and employing the complacent, reassuring manner of a man who has figured out how to minister to the

wealthy, he set about his main task: to establish a divide between the Christian church and the dead cultists who had considered themselves the true Christians.

To this end, the reverend read a letter that had just been released by Mark Applewhite, the son of the cult's leader, Marshall Applewhite. "I am appalled by the things that have resulted from the actions

of my father and others in the cult," the reverend read, emphasizing the word appalled. The members of the congregation shuffled and nodded. The leader's own son, himself a born-again Chris-



The cult rejected cherubim in favor of a doe-eyed E.T.

tian, had repudiated the man. What better proof that the suicides were blasphemous and idolatrous, a pagan apostasy?

After the service, I drove out of the village and up toward the death house. Despite the reverend's gentle humor, Rancho Santa Fe a few days after the suicides could not shake its sense of apocalyptic dread. The overcast sky was gunmetal-gray. A

chilly wind rattled the eucalyptus trees along El Camino del Norte, the two-lane road that winds through the town's steep hills, past the orange groves and horse paddocks, toward the cul-de-sac where

the thirty-nine cultists had taken their lives.

The horde of camera crews had disappeared. The street itself, Colina Norte, had been cordoned off by the police, but it still exerted a baleful, magnetic force. A group of spectators had gathered, and they wandered up and down beside the road, milling restlessly, horrified and fascinated in front of this place where the gods had scorched the earth.

A Hispanic woman in tight burgundy slacks raised her camera to take a picture of the house but couldn't quite bring herself to snap the shutter. Instead, she crossed herself and seemed to shiver. "Sick," she said. "We live in a sick, sick society."

"They were just true believers," I said.

The woman looked at me angrily. "True believers would never do a thing like this."

I WASN'T QUITE SO SURE. In fact, I had a suspicion that Rev. Nelson and the woman in the burgundy slacks and most of the media had missed the main point of Heaven's Gate. What had happened on Colina Norte was not really about our supposedly degenerate society. Nor was it about the perils

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OFFER EXPIRES 10/97 • OFFER NOT AVAILABLE TO MINORS • OFFER GOOD ONLY IN THE USA 1-800-237-2559 Dept.-T441 Fax: 813-882-4605 of charismatic manipulation, the Internet, whacked-out Trekkies, the Hale-Bopp Comet, loopy California utopianism, or the existential anomie of living in "the context of no context." What the story really was about, I felt, was religion. It was about the fatal power of belief.

After all, one of the most intriguing paradoxes of religion is that it compels some people, in their struggle to solve the mystery of life, to do things that for other people only compound the mystery. Which was why the reaction to the suicides was even more interesting, or at least more revealing, than the cultists' murky thinking. Though Americans love the idea of religion, they are frightened of true religion's naked power.

The story of the mass suicide broke at a time when America was wallowing in its religiosity. Time magazine had just run the cover story does Heaven ex-IST?, and a week later Newsweek's cover was the mystery of prayer while U.S. News & World Report tackled LIFE AFTER DEATH. All these articles tried to imply that Americans, more than 90 percent of whom claim to believe in God, are a deeply religious people whose spiritual nature is misunderstood and ignored by a relentlessly secular media. Americans like to take pride not just in attending church but in the strength of their beliefs. A couple of weeks before the mass suicide, George Will had written a column that mocked Unitarianism as a "mild and inoffensive" faith lacking conviction. True conviction, he seemed to suggest, could be measured by its willingness to offend.

The Heaven's Gate cultists had, if nothing else, truly awesome convictions. Nonetheless, when news of the mass suicide broke, the response of the media was reflexively secular. Newsweek, forgetting it had just revealed that almost half of all Americans believe prayer can influence the outcome of sports events, decried the group's "twisted theology." Time, ignoring the fact that it had reported two weeks before that 43 percent of Americans believe in a heaven where angels strum harps, dismissed the cult's "millennial kitsch." The media's objective, it seemed clear, was not just to mock the cultists, which was easy enough, but to reassure Americans that their religious

instincts and institutions had nothing in common with those of the dead technomystics. After all, Time declared, in the cult's belief system "spiritual yearnings are captured in new-age gibberish, then edged with the glamour of sci-fi and the consolations of a toddler's bedtime."

But the group's lack of theological complexity hardly disqualifies it as genuinely religious. Its members were pretheological, like the ecstatic early Christians before Saint Augustine's writings and the Nicene Creed codified their beliefs. As William James noted in The Varieties of Religious Experience,

"The mystical feeling of enlargement, union, and emancipation has no specific intellectual content whatever of its own." Furthermore, "abandonment of selfresponsibility seems to be the fundamental act in specifically religious, as distinguished from moral, practice. It antedates theologies and is independent of philosophies."

THE MEDIA also ridiculed the cult's iconography. The group had the gall, the effrontery, the tastelessness to reject

European High Culture-the cherubim and seraphim, the trumpets and doves, the halos and floating berobed figures all sanctioned by centuries of great artistsin favor of pop artifacts and "junk culture": the luminous red galaxy on the Heaven's Gate Web site, the glowing, doe-eyed alien, the spacecraft.

But, as a matter of fact, the very cartoonishness of the cult's imagery can be taken as a testament to the purity of its primitive fervor. "Ritual worship in general appears to the modern transcendentalist, as well as to the ultrapuritanic type of mind, as if addressed to a deity of an almost absurdly childish character," James pointed out.

Are aliens any more cartoonish than angels? Some 90 percent of Americans now say they believe in angels. There are movies and television shows about angels. Bookstores devote entire sections to the growing body of angel literature. The Oxford English Dictionary defines angels as "an order of spiritual beings superior to man in power and intelligence," which sounds a lot like a definition of aliens.

Not surprisingly, there has been an effort in the burgeoning angel literature to connect them with extraterrestrials. According to Matthew Fox and Rupert Sheldrake in The Physics of Angels, extraterrestrials are merely "mechanized" angels. "A spiritual void," Sheldrake explains, "was created when the religious imagination withdrew from the heavens, and because the scientific imagination is so impoverished, science fiction has risen

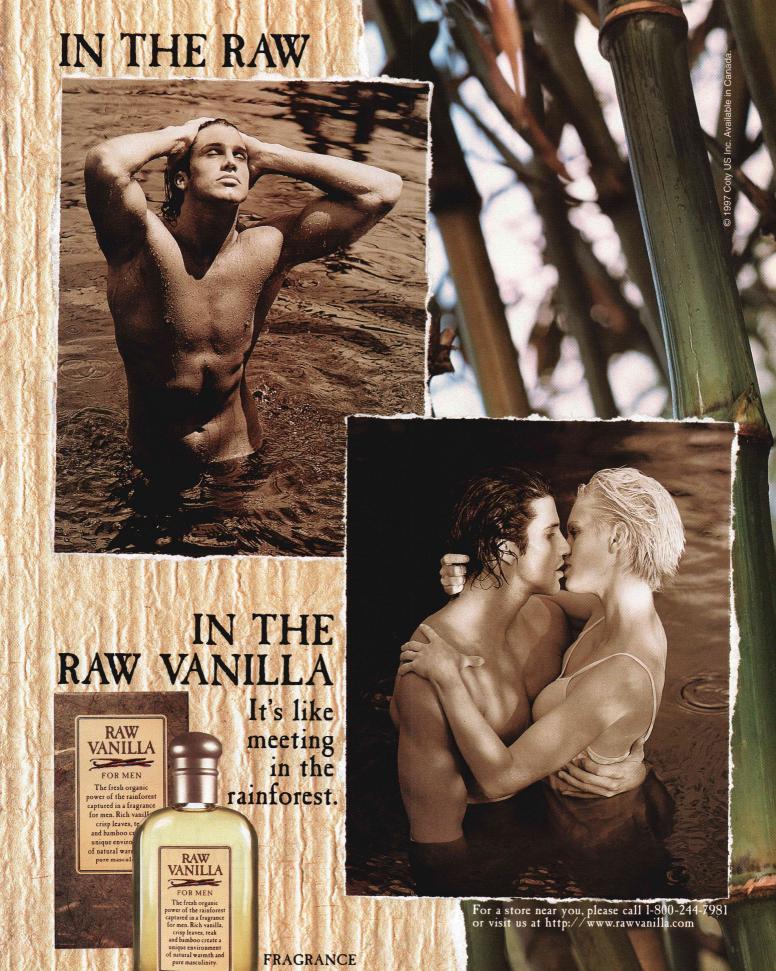
up to fill the gap."

In any case, appropriating popular iconography has traditionally been a key to religious success. The early Christians did so enthusiastically. Easter is based on a pagan festival honoring Eastre, the Saxon goddess of spring, Christmas on the sun celebration of the early Christians' rival cult, Mithraism. The clerical collar was adapted from the throat scarf favored by Roman orators, the priest's stole from Roman authorities. And

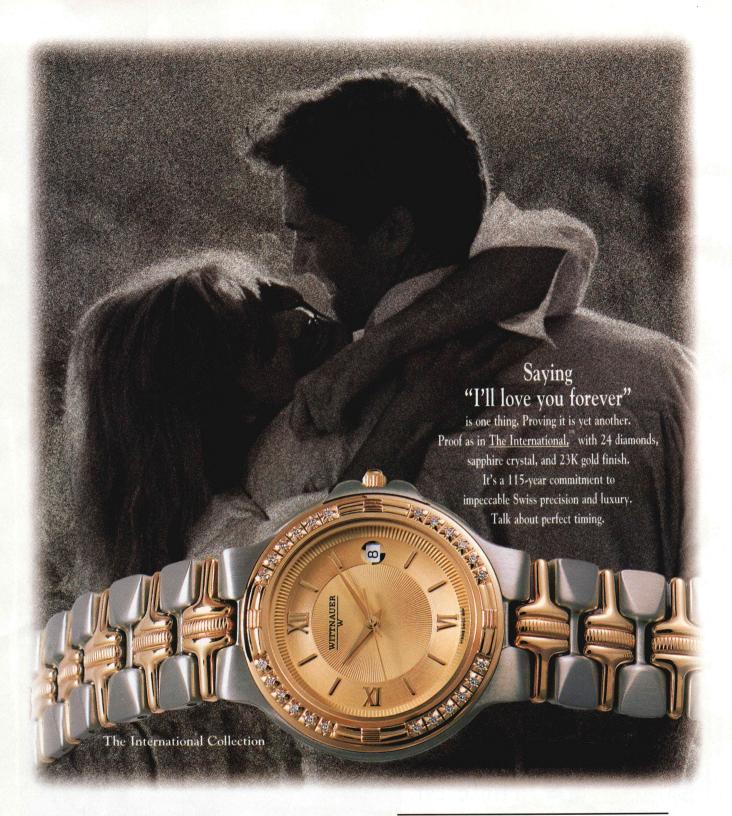
each age has reworked church imagery by incorporating more contemporary cultural elements. Bastien-Lepage painted the archangel Michael in medieval armor. Caravaggio depicted Saint Matthew as a Renaissance courtier wearing tights and a quilted jerkin.

When it came to iconography, the cultists knew exactly what they were doing. "One of the greatest struggles we've had from the beginning is the terminology," they wrote in one of their "Exit Statements." "If we try to correct the vision of the Christians and talk their language, we're seen as a religious cult on an ego trip—if we try to state our information in language more relevant to our actual situation, the masses see us as attempting to make the 'Trekkie' vernacular into a religion."

New York Times columnist Frank Rich called Marshall Applewhite a "flimflam man." But Do, to use the



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name he chose for himself, at least had the courage of his convictions. He was not a charlatan. Unlike, say, Pat Robertson, he did not set out to amass a fortune. The media also attempted to reduce Applewhite to the sum of his psychological maladies. He was variously described as "deluded," "alienated," "troubled," "misguided," and, in the words of one psychiatrist, "very repressed." That may well be true as a psychological explanation, but the same can be said of every prophet and most saints.

The saint experiences, if only once in his life and only momentarily, an overwhelming sense of "divine presence," James explained. Often, the saint is a divided self. What he feels is a sudden, transcendent moment of unity. As a result of this "firsthand religious experience," the saint becomes obsessed with "the reality of the unseen." Initially, he appears to be "a mere lonely madman." However, "if his doctrine proves contagious enough to spread to others, it becomes a definite and labeled heresy. But if it then still proves contagious enough to triumph over persecution,

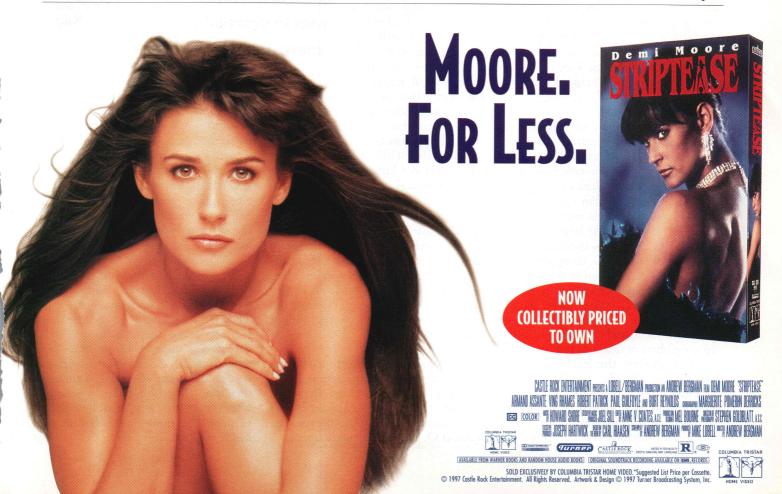
it becomes itself an orthodoxy." Those faithful to the orthodoxy—the vast majority of believers—never have a "firsthand" religious experience. "The faithful live at second hand exclusively and stone the prophets in their turn."

Applewhite's life, in fact, resembled that of a number of Christian saints, notably Saint Bernard, the twelfth-century Abbot of Clairvaux. Like Applewhite, Saint Bernard for years struck many people as normal. "His personal attractiveness and wit, his affability and sweetness of temper, endeared him to everybody," Alban Butler wrote in Lives of the Saints. Like Applewhite, Saint Bernard had a spontaneous conversion and in a matter of weeks persuaded thirty-one men to follow him. "Bernard's eloquent appeals were irresistible; mothers feared for their sons, wives for their husbands. lest they come under the sway of that compelling voice and look."

Like Applewhite, Saint Bernard led his followers into the rural wasteland, the Valley of Wormwood, where they lived lives of incredible deprivation, eating coarse barley bread and boiled beech leaves. And like Applewhite, Saint Bernard ruthlessly regimented the lives of his followers. "Bernard at first was so severe in his discipline, coming down upon the smallest distractions and least transgressions of his brethren," wrote Butler, "that although his monks behaved with the utmost humility and obedience, they began to be discouraged."

Applewhite's followers may well have been, as Ted Turner inimitably put it, "a few nuts." But it is also true that throughout Christianity, intense religious devotion has confounded and frightened society. The families of true believers considered them deluded and used physical force to keep them at home.

In thirteenth-century Italy, after the young woman who was to become Saint Clare heard Saint Francis of Assisi speak in a church, she tore off her expensive clothes, cut her hair, and donned sackcloth. "No sooner was her action made public but her friends and relations came in a body to draw her out of her retreat," Butler related. "It is said that Clare resisted and held to the altar so fast as to pull



its cloths half off when they endeavored to drag her away."

In fact, such fanaticism, identical in all respects to the fanaticism of the Heaven's Gate cultists, has been practically a requirement for sainthood in the Catholic Church. Take, for example, Saint Catherine of Siena, who claimed that in a vision, Christ had placed on her finger a ring that, though invisible to others, she could see quite clearly. "Although many claimed her as a saint, some dubbed her a fanatic, whilst others loudly denounced her as a hypocrite," Butler explained.

And there was Saint Rose of Lima, a beautiful young woman who rubbed her face with pepper and scoured her skin with lime to disfigure herself and who wore a silver crown studded with needles, the points directed inward to abrade her scalp constantly. Most of the people who knew her believed she was insane, Butler acknowledged. She "suffered during fifteen years of persecution from her friends and others." The church, while celebrating such excessive behavior once it passes into history, actually fears it while it is taking place. Which is why Butler discouraged his readers from trying to emulate the saints: "The mode of life and ascetical practices of Saint Rose of Lima are suitable only for those few whom God calls to them; the ordinary Christian may not seek to copy them."

In the end, it was, of course, the cult's decision to commit mass suicide that most offended mainstream religious sensibilities. For centuries, suicide has been considered one of the gravest sins a Christian can commit. The strictest sanctions were reserved for it. In fact, the abuse heaped on the Heaven's Gate cultists, the desecration of their memories, is comparable to the physical desecration of the corpses of suicides that took place in Elizabethan England: Stakes were driven through them, stones were placed over their faces, and they were hoisted up on gibbets at the crossroads.

But during the early days of Christianity, suicide actually enjoyed a vogue among the faithful. In fact, most of the early martyrs were what the sociologist Émile Durkheim called "altruistic" suicides. They engaged in behavior that they well knew would result in their death. But since they believed those who had told them that by embracing Jesus Christ they were guaranteed eternal bliss in a glorious heaven, it was absolutely logical for them to want to proceed there as quickly as possible.

As a result, many Christians sought out opportunities for martyrdom, leading to the "suicide mania" of the fourth century. "Many of these fanatics were possessed with the horror of life and the desire of martyrdom," Edward Gibbon wrote in The

History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. "Sometimes they rudely disturbed the festivals and profaned the temples of paganism with the design of exciting the most zealous of the idolators to revenge the insulted honor of their Gods. They sometimes forced their way into the courts of justice and compelled the affrighted judge to give orders for their execution."

"To kill themselves out of respect

for martyrdom is their daily sport," complained Saint Augustine, who in reaction to this mania devised the church's arguments against suicide: It violates the Fifth Commandment, Thou shalt not kill, and is particularly criminal because it allows the killer, since he is dead, no chance to repent. The Heaven's Gate cultists, in rejecting the Christian church as hypocritical, also rejected its Augustinian morality and reverted to the irresistible deathlogic of the early Christian martyrs. "For us to shed our vehicles is totally opposite of somebody committing suicide," one of them wrote. "It's a final act of trust."

This was my third trip to California in six years to cover a bizarre multiple killing. In 1992, I had come out to attend the trial of the Menendez brothers. In 1994, it had been to observe the scene at O. J. Simpson's indictment.

Both of these events had involved not just theatrical deaths but the violation of powerful taboos. They had the deranged violence and incest themesparricide, the butchery of a mother while her children slept upstairs-of some Euripidean drama. While the murder scenes had been horrifying, the true horror had come from the revelation of the utter soullessness of the murderers.

The suicides in Rancho Santa Fe were chilling in a different way. Now the soulful were destroying themselves. Killing had evolved from drama into rit-

ual, an act staged for the sanctification of the performers. The cultists had restored that supremely primeval religious impulse: human sacrifice. Suicide had become a sacrament.

The members of the congregation listening to Rev. Paul Nelson that Easter morning had seemed offended by the way this manifestation of primitive fervor had disrupted their sedate weekly routine. Religion in Rancho Santa Fe is designed, above all, to avoid giving offense. The townspeople approach it

the way they do their hedge funds-a part of the portfolio set aside to thwart a downturn in the market. Few of them, it seemed safe to say, would have walked away from their Italianate villas, their golf carts, and their thoroughbreds if Christ had appeared in their enameled village and said, as he did to Matthew when he found him counting the tax money he had collected, "Follow me."

Why should they? As the reverend had pointed out, they were already in paradise. The Heaven's Gate cultists, like the early Christians, were not. They led desperate lives, and the decision to leave them behind, I felt, deserved a measure of respect. As I looked at the Colina Norte mansion that chilly Easter afternoon, I thought they had, if nothing else, opened a window to the past, enabling us to glimpse the power of belief at the dawn of Christianity. 12

Suicide enjoyed a vogue among early Christians. **If embracing Jesus** guaranteed them eternal bliss in heaven, it was logical for them to want to proceed there quickly.

Actually, the song goes:
"Yo-ho-ho and a bottle
of velvety-smooth, slightly
smoky-tasting rum."



OUNT GA

Esquire inthe By RON ROSENBAUM OUSE

FOR MORE THAN FORTY YEARS, J. D. Salinger has lived in self-exile behind a Wall of Silence, an enigma in a celebrity culture. Now, by allowing the reissue of his 1965 short story, "Hapworth 16, 1924," is the last private person in America trying to tell us something? An obsessive pilgrimage to Salinger's New

Hampshire sanctuary, where, if you listen closely, you can hear the sound of one man hiding.

I.D. and Groucho: Salinger invites a woman and her five-year-old child to watch a Marx brothers movie with him.





HERE IS NO NAME on the mailbox at the bottom of the driveway. It's the only mailbox on the route with no name. The house above the driveway is screened by a slope of trees, several of which brandish glaring neon-pink NO TRESPASS-ING signs. Signs that, in addition to specifying NO HUNTING, TRAPPING, FISH-ING in big black capitals, proceed further to emphasize the sweeping meta-

physical inclusiveness of the prohibition by adding OR TRESPASSING OF ANY KIND.

Just being here, at the bottom of the driveway, just beyond the verge of the property line, feels like a trespass of some kind. This is not just private property. It is the property of the most private man in America, perhaps the last private person in America. The silence surrounding this place is not just any silence. It is the work of a lifetime. It is the work of renunciation and determination and expensive litigation. It is a silence of self-exile, cunning, and contemplation. In its own powerful, invisible way, the silence is in itself an eloquent work of art. It is the Great Wall of Silence J. D. Salinger has built around himself.

It is not a passive silence; it's a palpable, provocative silence. It's the kind of silence people make pilgrimages to witness, to challenge. It's a silence we both respect and resent, a lure and a reproof. Something draws us to it, makes us interrogate it, test it.

There's a line in Mao II, Don DeLillo's novel about a Salinger-like reclusive writer who wonders: Why are so many so obsessed with my invisibility, my hiddenness, my absence?

"When a writer doesn't show his face," he answers himself, "he becomes a local symptom of God's famous reluctance to appear."

The silence of a writer is not the same as the silence of God, but there's something analogous: an awe-inspiring creator, someone we believe has some answers of some kind, refusing to respond to us, hiding his face, withholding his creation. The problem, the rare phenomenon of the unavailable, invisible, indifferent writer (indifferent to our questions, indifferent to the publicity-industrial complex so many serve), is the literary equivalent of the problem of theodicy, the specialized subdiscipline of theology that addresses the problem of the apparent silent indifference of God to the hell of human suffering.

And when a writer won't break his silence, we think of ways to break into it. We think of knocking on his door or leaving messages in his mailbox.

S.'s two mailboxes beckoned to me as I stood at the

bottom of his driveway.

The gray metal U. S. Postal Service box was shut with a rusty hasp. But next to it stood a forest-green, open-ended mailbox with the logo of a local paper, West Lebanon's Valley News, on it. Empty, except that stuck in the back was a single piece of printed matter that looked as if it had been orphaned there for some time. Someone else's message for S.? It turned out to be a junk-mail flyer, perhaps the single most misdirected piece of junk mail in America.

GET ON TARGET! the flyer shrieked in hyperventilating three-inch-high type. It was a junk-mail flyer advertising customized promotional junk-mail flyers—meta junk mail. LET US HELP YOU ADVERTISE YOUR BUSINESS! it urged J. D. Salinger.

America's self-promotional culture reaching out to

target the last private person left.

It made me think twice about leaving a letter there, a message for S. It made me think more than twice about what I might say, or whether I should just depart and leave his silence in silence. Wouldn't any message at all, however heartfelt, be a similar sort of sacrilege, just another piece of junk mail targeting S.?

I knew I had to consider my next move carefully, because I could end up doing something I might regret for a long time.

THE SEASON WHEN THE SILENT SPEAK

The night before I set out for New Hampshire, I heard a strange tale about J. D. Salinger's Wall: the Fake Wounds Story. It came up after I'd mentioned my fascination with S.'s Wall in a talk I'd given at Harvard's Nieman Fellows house. Hoping I might smoke out some arcane lore about S. (or at least his address) from the ace reporters in my audience, I told them about my concept for the expedition: I would be heading up to Cornish, the tiny, hilly hamlet

silence of a writer is not quite the same as the silence of God, but there's something analogous: an awe-inspiring creator, someone who we believe has some answers of some kind, refusing to respond to us, hiding his face, withholding his creation.

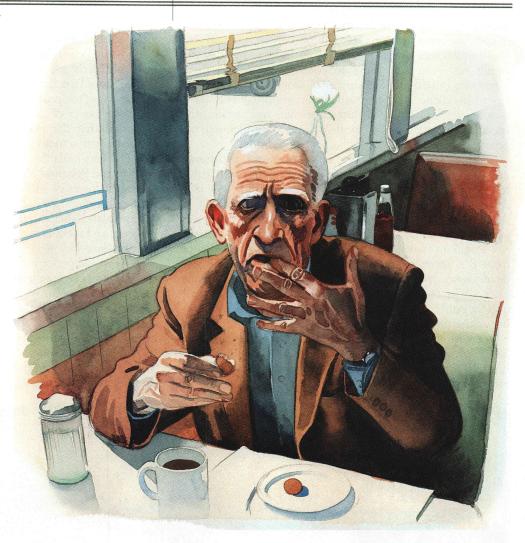
eighteen miles south of Hanover that has been S.'s place of silent retreat for the past forty-four years. Not to disturb S., not to knock on his door or wait on his doorstep. No, I told them, what I most wanted to do was gaze at S.'s wall. This was at least partially true. If S. were to emerge from behind the wall and engage me in a discussion about "the sound of one hand clapping," I would not decline. But I did not expect this would happen. My idea was that S.'s Wall itself—not just the physical wall of wood or stone I'd heard he'd built around his house but the metaphysical Wall, the Wall of Silence he'd built around himself, around his work—was in a way his most powerful, most eloquent, perhaps his most lasting work of art. I explained my notion of the Party of Silence: how writers like Salinger and Thomas Pynchon and William Wharton and to some extent Don DeLillo (less silent than publicity shy) constituted a small but powerful minority caucus in American culture. They are less a party than a loose-

knit group of kindred spirits whose varieties of conscious silence range from writing but not publishing (S.) to publishing but not appearing (Pynchon) to publishing under a pseudonym to avoid publicity (Wharton) to publishing but not actively publicizing himself (DeLillo). Their varieties of reticence and concealment and self-effacement cumulatively constitute a provocative dissent from the culture of self-promotion that has swept contemporary publishing, a reproof to the roaring "white noise" (a DeLillo-novel title) of the publicity-industrial complex that dominates con-

temporary celebrity culture.

And suddenly this season, it seemed that the silent—in their own idiosyncratic gestural ways-had begun to speak! In January, a report stunned the literary world to the effect that S. had made a small but significant reversal, a slight opening, if not a breach, in the Wall. He had inexplicably, quixotically granted permission to a small-press publisher (Orchises Press in Alexandria, Virginia, which specializes in little-known contemporary poets) to issue a hardcover edition of his last published story, "Hapworth 16, 1924," which had first appeared in the June 19, 1965, issue of The New Yorker and survived mainly in faded nth-generation photocopies.

This was a surprising and puzzling reversal because S. had declined for three decades to permit the story to be is-



Raise high the doughnut holes: salinger enjoying his favorite junk food.

sued in book form (as he had his other long New Yorker stories like "Franny" and "Zooey"). And he'd made it his practice to unleash from behind his wall attack-dog legal assaults on unauthorized publication of other uncanonical works (early uncollected short stories; personal letters a biographer found in university archives). He'd even succeeded in suppressing quotations from already published works: Late last year, his agents forced a nonprofit Web site run by a fan of The Catcher in the Rye to cease offering inspirational quotations from the novel to other fans.

The "Hapworth" development wasn't earth-shattering on the face of it: S. wasn't releasing the rumored novel or novels he's been working on for the last three decadesthe ones that, according to some reports, will continue to gather dust in a safe somewhere until (at least) after his death. He wasn't going to tour behind the "Hapworth" story or visit Oprah's Book Club. But against the background of the Wall, the monolithic, uncompromising Wall of Silence he'd erected around himself, the decision seemed to portend something more than the mere reprint of a magazine story.

S. turned seventy-eight this year; he'd been off for decades on what many supposed was some kind of spiritual quest, seeking something that demanded isolation and silence, a quest that had to be shielded by the Wall. Had he

decided to compromise the strictness of his silence because of his awareness of mortality—the onrushing, unbreakable silence to come? Or had his quest at last produced some answer he wanted to begin to communicate? Was there something buried in the "Hapworth" story, some clue, some key to his silence, that he wanted to remind us of? Since it was S., now more mythic presence than real person, the speculations were tinged with a kind of millennial urgency—the promised return of a prophet.

What gave the Salinger announcement additional impact was that it came close upon the disclosure that his fellow pillar of the Party of Silence, Thomas Pynchon, was about to publish a new novel, Mason & Dixon, his first in seven years. And Pynchon would be followed, later this year, by a much-anticipated new DeLillo novel, Underworld.

Pynchon's silence had been a different sort of silence from S.'s, more moderate in one respect: Unlike S., he'd never ceased to publish out of principle. But more extreme than S.'s in another respect: S. had, in the postwar era, cut quite a public figure in the New York literary world-dining at the Stork Club with his British publishers, playing poker with writers and editors, lunching with urbane New Yorker wits like S. J. Perelman-before he suddenly exiled himself, silenced himself as a public persona, retreated behind his Wall, and stopped publishing, if not writing.

Pynchon's legendary invisibility had been so complete for so long that back in 1976 one imaginative author (John Calvin Batchelor) had even written an extremely clever mock-scholarly essay arguing the half-serious conjecture that Thomas Pynchon was J. D. Salinger, a Salinger who had been evading (or protecting) his Wall of Silence by publishing under cover of the Pynchon pseudonym. Others have suggested that the man behind the pseudonym William Wharton was actually Salinger incognito.

The accumulation of comic exotic speculations about Salinger and Pynchon is testimony in a way to the compelling hold their forms of silence still have over us. In a publicitymad, celebrity-crazed culture, they have become in effect the Madonna and Michael Jackson of Silence, celebrities for their reticence and their renunciation of celebrity, for their Bartleby the Scrivener-like great refusal, the resounding echo of their silent "I would prefer not to." You can gauge the continuing totemic power of Salinger's name in the zeitgeist-sensitive film Jerry Maguire, in which Tom Cruise compares the unadorned reticence of the cover of his idealistic "Mission Statement" (the critique of go-go materialism that gets him fired from his sports-marketing agency) to the purity of the cover of The Catcher in the Rye.

Of course, within the Party of Silence, there is not one silence but many varieties and degrees of reticence. Literary

history has given us burning silence, perhaps the most extreme and heartbreaking case being Nikolai Gogol's feeding the second part of his comic masterpiece Dead Souls into the flames of a wood-burning stove in the throes of a spiritual crisis or nervous breakdown. There is the silence of low self-esteem: Emily Dickinson's not believing her works were truly worthy of ever appearing. There is the enforced silence of censorship, the internal silence of crippling writer's block. But the silence one confronts in S.'s driveway is the silence whose power is most compelling: the deliberate silence that represents some kind of

spiritual renunciation, what the Trappist writer Thomas Merton called elected silence. "The withheld work of art," someone says in a DeLillo novel, "is the only eloquence left."

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Pynchon, on the other hand, had almost from the very beginning refused to play the literary game: He'd always been an absence rather than a presence. He's been a stealth writer from the moment the publicity-industrial complex first tried to fix him on its radar screen. Legend has it that Pynchon was living in Mexico at the time his remarkable debut novel, V., was about to appear in 1963 and that when he discovered that Time magazine had sent someone down there to photograph the new sensation, "he just got on a bus and disappeared," as one of his associates told me. Ever since, for thirty years, he's been a wraith, a rumor with no known address. (At least with Salinger, we knew what state, what town, he lived in.)

TRYING THE PATIENCE OF A SAINT

To return to the Fake Wounds Story: Just as I'd hoped, one of the Nieman Fellows approached me after my talk with a fascinating story about S. He had a friend, he said, who, as a youth, had made the Pilgrimage to Salinger's House, a journey that is the closest thing a secular literary culture has to a religious ritual, a rite of passage. It is a pilgrimage S.-much

to his regret, one must suppose—seemed to encourage with a famous passage in The Catcher in the Rye in which Holden Caulfield describes the powerful connection he feels with writers whose work he loves and how that kind of connection makes him want to call the writer up. He doesn't say look the writer up, but few pilgrims make that distinction because few have his phone number anyway. (I have a number for him. I just haven't used it.)

The Pilgrimage to S.'s House, to the shadow of his Wall, has itself become part of American literary myth, most prominently in W. P. Kinsella's Shoeless Joe, in which an Iowa farmer

sets off for New Hampshire with a plan to kidnap J. D. Salinger and take him to a baseball game because a Voice has given him the mission to "ease his pain." The Fake Wounds Story turned out to be a kind of inadvertently parodic inversion of the ease-his-pain injunction. That night in my hotel room in Cambridge, I was able to track down the guy that the Nieman Fellow had told me about, the one who'd made the fakewounds pilgrimage.

The way he told it, back in the sixties, when they were teenagers, he and a couple of similarly Salinger-obsessed buddies had hatched what they thought was a fiendishly clever plan to lure Salinger out from behind his Wall. The plan was to drive to Cornish and locate the Salinger house, at which point he planned to tear up his clothes and cover his head and body with ketchup to simulate blood-to make it look as if he'd been badly beaten up. They'd screech up the driveway to the walls of S.'s house,

toss the "victim" out of the car, roar off, and leave him there moaning. The idea was that S. would then have to emerge—he couldn't resist the cry for help of a man who might be bleeding to death on his doorstep. That S. would have to come out from behind his Wall, take the fellow in, and ease his pain.

In a slapdash way, it was a plan to try the patience of a saint, because embedded in it was an ethical/spiritual dilemma: The ketchup-smeared kid would not be just another feckless adolescent fan or a doorstepping journalist but a suffering human being in need of help. Could S. refuse?

And so they did it—smeared the ketchup, dumped the body out right in front of the wall. The kid began moaning in pain from his fake wounds and waiting to see whether S.

would appear to help heal them.

A brief digression might be in order here on S.'s Wall, the theories of its origins and true purpose, including its possible genesis in the Girl Reporter Betrayal Story. A digression I make in the spirit of Thisbe's plaintive apostrophe in the Mechanicals' play in A Midsummer Night's Dream,

the one that she addresses to the actor playing "Wall": "O Wall, full often hast thou heard my moans."

The most convincing account of the first appearance of S.'s Wall can be found in the only serious Salinger biography in existence, In Search of J. D. Salinger, by Ian Hamilton. It's a book whose tortured history is in a way monument to, and victim of, S.'s silence, one that bears real wounds, gaping holes in it from its encounter, its painful collision, with the Wall.

Hamilton, the respected British biographer of Robert Lowell and himself a poet, set out to write a life of S., knowing it was unlikely S. would cooperate. But Hamilton could



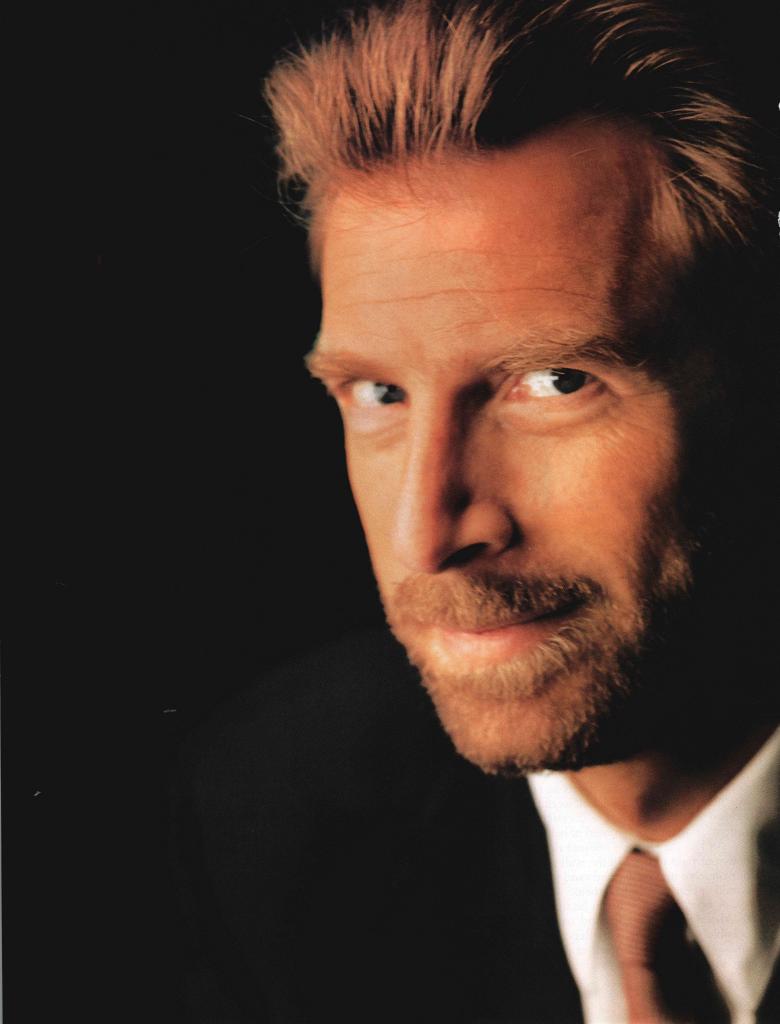
RECLUSE DRIVER? "IF A CAR COULD LOOK FURIOUS, THIS ONE DID."

not have expected the veritable war S. eventually waged against his book, a war to force Hamilton to rip out from his manuscript quotations and paraphrases from some private letters of S.'s he'd located.

Still, the wounded version of the Hamilton book that survived S.'s legal attack contains some surprising material, none more so than his account of the origin of the Wall.

According to Hamilton's chronology, S. moved to Cornish in January 1953. Then thirty-four, he was a success both critically and commercially from the 1951 publication of The Catcher in the Rye but not yet a cult figure. His hegira to the mountain fastness of the North must have helped contribute to the cult-he was no longer a New York writer, however special; he was now the Man on the Mountaintop. In fact, the property occupies a hilltop, albeit one that is almost invariably referred to as a hilltop "with a view of five states" (perhaps because of the implicit spiritual resonance of states).

Most accounts agree that S.'s retreat had something to do with the spiritual transformation he [continued on page 116]



By Frank Rose

THE CRACKLE of walkietalkies reverberated through the amphitheater. "Mr. Bronfman has taken his seat." "Mr. Bronfman is ready now." It was February 1997, and hundreds of people—agents, producers, executives, starswere gathered on the hill at Universal City, a former chicken ranch turned Hollywood theme park, for the premiere of Dante's Peak, the first movie from Universal Pictures' new management. Two years earlier, Edgar Bronfman Jr. had paid \$5.7 billion to win control of Universal and its parent, the lackluster entertainment colossus MCA Inc. On this night, it's safe to say, he was hoping for a good time.

The press was painting Bronfman, the forty-two-yearold president of the Seagram Company, the Montreal-based beverage conglomerate, as a starstruck rich kid who'd recklessly traded Seagram's dull-but-profitable quarter ownership of the chemical combine DuPont to play movie mogul. In fact, Bronfman had been spending most

Dante's Peak fizzled. The stock price is

stalled. But two years after the Seagram heir spent \$5.7 billion for MCA Inc., Hollywood's top power brokers are betting he's not a third-generation bimbo. of his time in New York and keeping a low profile when he did come to the Coast. The town was full of actors and producers who'd cut big deals at Universal-Sylvester Stallone, Demi Moore, Mike Nichols, Danny DeVito-but those pacts had been made with Ron Meyer, the talent agent Bronfman had brought in as president. To most of the powerful at the amphitheater, Bronfman himself was still an enigma.

As the crowd settled in, Bronfman and his stun-

ning, Venezuelan-born wife, Clarissa Alcock, sat front and center. No one would guess by looking at him that, based on the latest consumer-tracking surveys, his \$100 million-plus volcano thriller faced almost certain disaster. Trim

and stylish in a double-breasted Armani suit, he radiated self-assurance as everyone waited for the pro-

jector to roll.

And waited. And waited.

For more than an hour, as the mood swung from restlessness to embarrassed disbelief, nothing happened. Technical difficulties. Equipment problems. Total meltdown. The murmuring began: How could this guy run a movie studio when he couldn't even run a movie? Edgar shook his head but remained calm.

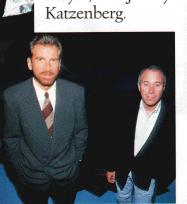
As it turned out, Dante's Peak didn't do badly that weekend-\$18.5 million, number two behind the spectacularly successful rerelease of Star Wars. But it was a sobering experience. "Edgar's not a dilettante," says his friend Steve Tisch, coproducer of Forrest Gump and other films. "He understands that it's not about premieres and opening-night parties. But now I think he's getting a real taste of how tough the marketplace is."

T'S NOT EASY BEING A JUNIOR, especially when your last name means "whiskey man" in Yiddish, your dad is worth \$2.7 billion, and you gave up a nascent career as a film producer to be groomed for the top spot in the family multinational. Nor does it help that Bronfman-tall and lean, with flawless skin and closely cropped hair and beard-looks more like a star than a grasping, rapacious mogul. "People in our business are more comfortable if you seem dysfunctional in some way," jokes Apollo 13 producer Brian Grazer.

Bronfman has friends with similar backgrounds. "It's a bond that has tied us together," says the actor Michael Douglas. "Having successful fathers, knowing how diffi-

Power Circles

Clockwise from left: Bronfman and his father, Edgar Sr.; with David Geffen: at Herb Allen's Sun Valley retreat with (from left) Steven Spielberg, Ron Meyer, and Jeffrey Katzenberg.



cult it is to come out of the shadows." "It can cripple you," says Tisch, the son of Preston Robert Tisch, cochairman of the Loews Corporation. "But I chose to use my father's success as a role model, and I think Edgar did the same thing."

Bronfman's Hollywood friends-Tisch, Douglas, Grazer, David Geffen, Jeffrey Katzenberg, and Barry Diller among them-see Bronfman as a businessman whose romantic streak and gentlemanly charm mask a relentless drive to succeed. In two years, Bronfman has made some shrewd deals: buying half of Interscope Records for \$200 million, acquiring 50 percent of the hot sitcom-production company

Brillstein-Grey Entertainment for \$100 million. And he hasn't flinched at taking Sumner Redstone to court, incurring the wrath of self-appointed morality czar William Bennett, challenging Disney to a theme-park war, or telling Michael Ovitz, when Ovitz—then considered the most powerful man in Hollywood—was negotiating to run MCA, to get lost.

But Bronfman's real test came a month after the Ovitz imbroglio, when he faced induction into the small and contentious fraternity of his peers. Like every prospective infobaron, he had to make the case for his company at the summer camp held each year in Sun Valley by investment banker Herbert Allen. Seated before him were Diller, Katzenberg, Geffen, Warren Buffett, Henry Kravis, Larry Tisch, Gerald Levin, and Bill Gates. Lost in the crowd were money managers representing maybe \$1 trillion in assets. Bronfman was nervous.

The MCA deal had turned him into media roadkill. "The first film the company makes ought to be Dumb & Dumber II," said The Wall Street Journal. To a newly minted CEO so gun-shy he once tried to buy every copy of every photograph of himself in existence so he couldn't be on the cover of BusinessWeek, the scrutiny was excruciating. But here, he shone. He told them about Seagram's V.O. and Chivas Regal and Absolut and Tropicana. Then he talked about the entertainment business-about the hunger for Western pop culture, about Seagram's expertise at selling leisure-time products to people around the globe. "He stood up in front of what I would argue is the single toughest audience in the world and in his low-key, quite unassuming, charming way told as good a story as I've heard in the twelve years I've been going there," says Katzenberg. "These people spend their lives hearing stories, and Edgar blew them out the door."

But Bronfman wasn't sure how it had gone over, so he went to Barry Diller and asked him. Diller, a man not known for unrestrained enthusiasm, replied gruffly that

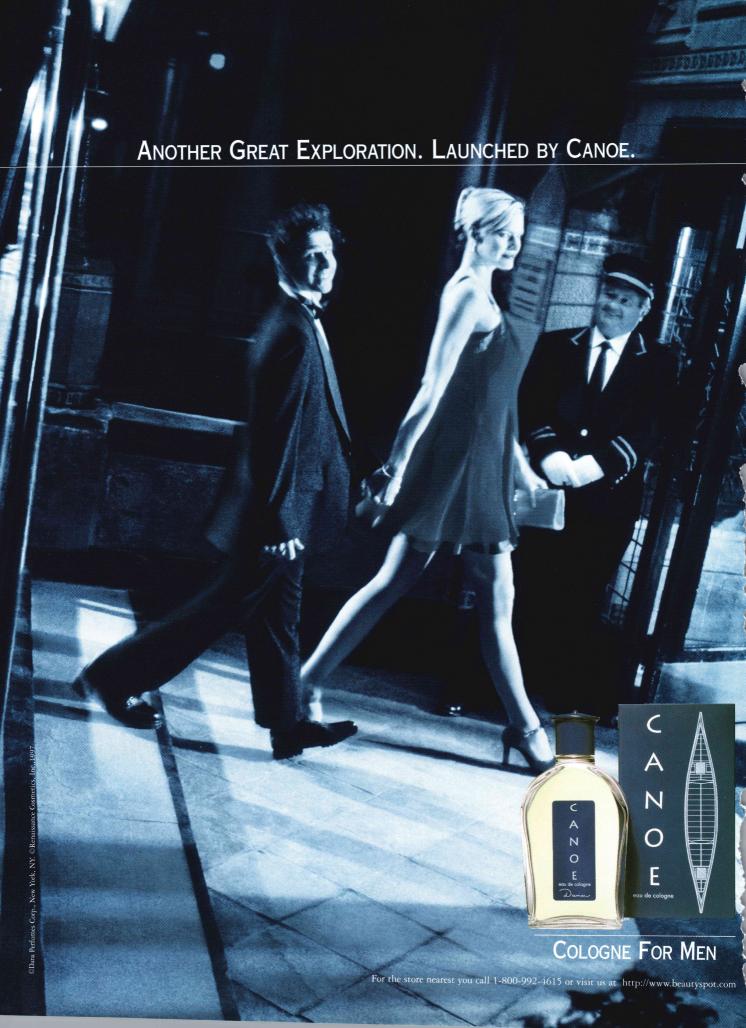
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FORMEN

▼LIFT HERE

NAVY ARMEN

THE CLEAN CLASSIC SCENT



at least he'd done what had to be done. And what was that? Bronfman asked.

Diller fixed him with a glare: "Prove you're not a thirdgeneration bimbo."

> MOOTH AND POLISHED, an artist by temperament, Edgar Bronfman Jr. now finds himself in the company of sharks. Put Cary Grant in The Player and you get the idea. The word on Bronfman in Hollywood is refreshing, as in "How refreshing it was to have this newcomer say no to Ovitz" or "How refreshing it is to have so much new blood at Universal"-a studio with more unrealized potential than any to change hands

since Michael Eisner took charge of Disney in 1984. But even his friends seem to wonder whether he's too nice for the business. After the Ovitz talks collapsed, when Bronfman and Geffen were about to announce a crucial deal that would give MCA foreign-distribution and theme-park rights to DreamWorks movies, the two men were checking the press-conference setup when Bronfman asked an employee whether he could make a minor change. Geffen was dumbfounded. "You own the studio!" he cried. "They'll do any-

thing you want—you don't have to ask."

It's ironic that the soft-spoken Bronfman now occupies the sixteenth-floor suite of the imperious Dr. Jules Caesar Stein, who founded MCA in the twenties as the Music Corporation of America, a band-booking agency that flourished in Al Capone's Chicago. Bronfman has tossed out Stein's English antiques and hunting prints in favor of sleek wood and vintage movie posters; with its panoramic view of Universal City and the San Fernando Valley, his aerie now has a glamorous, retro feel. He's even changed the name of the company, banishing MCA to corporate oblivion while applying the Universal brand name to everything except the record labels. It's as if he wants to erase every vestige of MCA's fierce talent-agency heritage-its years under Stein and the ferocious Lew Wasserman—and reinvent it as a happy place. That means luring key executives with the performance incentives Wasserman always disdained and finding filmmakers to fill the looming hole left by Steven Spielberg's departure for DreamWorks.

Suave and seductive, with the throatiest voice this side of Lauren Bacall, Bronfman is a persuasive suitor. After the Ovitz talks fell through in June 1995, he romanced Ron Meyer over dinner at his East Side townhouse, inducing Meyer before dessert to leave CAA—where he faced an extremely uncertain future, thanks to Ovitz's bungled dealmaking-for the number-two position at MCA. That same month, Bronfman was on the phone to Doug Morris, one of the most highly regarded executives in the music business, the moment Morris was fired from Warner Music. Bronfman also worked to keep Grazer and Ron Howard, Universal's second-biggest hit makers after Spielberg: As the lights went on after a White House screening of Apollo 13, Bronfman pushed past Bill Clinton and Al Gore to glad-hand the filmmakers. Grazer and Howard were impressed—and they stayed put.

On the movie side, however, Universal has perhaps courted too well. Deals have been lavish: George Clooney, who has yet to open a film, was given \$10 million to star in a picture by Steven Soderbergh, who hasn't had a hit since sex, lies and videotape. Meyer and Casey Silver, head of Universal Pictures, have made so many of these deals that if every one of them results in a film, there may not be enough release dates on the calendar to accommodate them. Yet Bronfman has been scrupulous about not interfering. When the hit movie Liar Liar was just a stack of paper in Brian Grazer's office, Bronfman read it-on the condition that Grazer not feel obliged to do what he said. "But you own the studio!" Grazer protested. "I know," Bronfman replied, "but it wouldn't be the proper way to run the company. I'm just doing this as a friend."

So far, the talent isn't complaining. "We love the place," says one new arrival. "Everything Sony did wrong, they're doing right." But other people are nonplussed. "Why would you make all these deals?" wonders a top talent agent. "It

doesn't make any sense."

Even Bronfman's newly hired managers find him oddly different from the carnivores who dominate the information age. Frank Biondi is said to have seen the contrast as soon as he became Universal's CEO, having been fired from the same position at Viacom a few months before by Sumner Redstone. For one thing, Bronfman wasn't there much: Clarissa was pregnant, and not long after Biondi came aboard in April 1996, she was confined to bed. And while Redstone had a lust for deals, Bronfman was focused on "textural" issues-values, goals, making the company work. The January before Biondi started, Bronfman and Meyer had begun a long process of "reengineering," which saw people pulled from their jobs, teamed with consultants from Booz, Allen & Hamilton, and told to rethink everything they were doing. Universal, long a bureaucratic quagmire, was ripe for change, but the short-term result was chaos.

Biondi and Meyer have gotten along well despite the differences in their backgrounds-East Coast Ivy League corporate versus West Coast high school dropout. Biondi was said to be less enamored of Meyer's two deputies, Howard Weitzman, a Los Angeles defense attorney who'd represented

The word on Bronfman in Hollywood

is refreshing—as in "How refreshing it was to have this newcomer say no to Ovitz"—but even his closest friends seem to wonder whether he's too nice for the business.

O. J. Simpson and John DeLorean, and Sanford Climan, a former CAA executive who'd negotiated many of the corporate deals Ovitz had been credited with. Weitzman and Climan had no more experience than Meyer in running a company with \$6 billion in sales, but unlike Meyer, they seemed not to know that they didn't know.

While his executives hashed things out, Bronfman concentrated on strategy. He wanted to rebuild Universal's languishing TV-production business, but he wasn't convinced that he'd need a network to guarantee distribution; he saw music and recreation as his real opportunities. Universal might not have Mickey Mouse, but its theme parks, with their "Ride the Movies" concept, offered the chance to tie the Universal brand to the magic of Hollywood. Early on, he approved a \$2.5 billion expansion of Universal Studios in Orlando, which will get a new theme park, a shopping-and-nightlife complex, a golf course, and (in partnership with Loews Hotels, headed by Bronfman's friend Jon Tisch) multiple themed hotels, finally enabling Universal to compete with Disney for overnight visitors. Then he revived a long-stalled deal to build a multibillion-dollar Universal theme park in Osaka, Japan. And with the help of his aunt, Phyllis Lambert-who forty years ago commissioned Mies van der Rohe to design the Seagram Building in New York—he selected Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas to develop a twenty-five-year master plan for Universal City, the 415-acre home base in Los Angeles.

In the midst of all this, Bronfman became mired in a battle with Sumner Redstone over Viacom's plan to launch TV Land, a nostalgia network spun off from Nickelodeon's popular Nick at Nite. The new network seemed to violate an old agreement between MCA and Paramount (now owned by Viacom) not to compete with the USA Network,

which the two companies own fifty-fifty.

Redstone and Bronfman negotiated a solution in a February 1996 meeting, at the end of which Viacom counsel Philippe Dauman substituted the term MTV for TV Land as he recapped the agreement. Bronfman says he assumed the substitution was inadvertent. Only later did he realize that MTV Networks is the umbrella group for all of Viacom's cable channels, and that when he thought he was merely exempting TV Land from the partnership agreement, he was in fact granting Viacom a blanket waiver for any channel it wished to start—or so Viacom maintained.

Seagram sued. Settlement talks began, only to collapse. Although Bronfman had been willing to sell his half of USA at the right price, when the case returned to court, he nonetheless testified that losing the network would "leave us strategically very disadvantaged." The press portrayed him as a waffling naïf, but in fact he never wavered from his goal—to get Redstone to pay, one way or another, for breaking the USA partnership agreement. Apparently, protecting his image was less important than taking on a bully.

"Edgar's like an artist," says a friend. "What allows him to be tough is that he has a real sense of pain. People like that remember when they've been fucked; they don't want to treat others that way, and they don't want it to happen again. He's not a soft rich guy. On the inside, there's some tough stuff-some place to reference that makes him tough."

> N THE EARLY EIGHTIES, when he first came to Hollywood, Edgar Bronfman sometimes told a story about himself-about how, as a boy of eleven or twelve, he was flown alone on a company jet across New England to look at boarding schools while his father was busy running Seagram. "Are you here with your father?" one headmaster asked as they walked across the campus. "No," young Edgar replied matter-of-factly, "I'm here with my pilot."

Self-reliance has been a Bronfman trait from the start. Edgar's grandfather, Samuel Bronfman, was the hard-driving son of Russian Jewish immigrants who began with his three brothers running hotels on the Canadian frontier and ended up the family patriarch in Montreal, having built Joseph E. Seagram & Sons into one of the world's greatest liquor businesses. There were some shady dealings along the way: The hotels were said to be whorehouses, and during Prohibition the Bronfmans supplied booze to Meyer Lansky, Frank Costello-a who's who of racketeering. In the curious little Scottish-baronial castle he built in downtown Montreal, Bronfman even kept a special office for entertaining bootleggers. The Canadian government considered it legal, but that didn't give Mr. Sam respectability.

Even so, his elder son, Edgar, was able to marry into Wall Street's German Jewish aristocracy. The bride, Ann Loeb, was the daughter of John Loeb, of Loeb, Rhoades and Co., and Frances Lehman, whose forebears had founded Lehman Brothers. Her family hardly lacked for money, and yet John Loeb was heard to say to his wife at the wedding, "Now I

know what it feels like to be a poor relation."

With their help, the Bronfmans would become richer still. CEMP, the Bronfman family trust (an acronym for Charles, Edgar, Minda, and Phyllis, Sam Bronfman's four children), went into oil and gas with Loeb, Rhoades; bought office buildings and shopping centers across Canada on its own; and invested in European tankers, real estate, and resorts with Minda's husband, Baron Alain de Gunzburg, a distant relative of the Rothschilds. By 1969, the family was

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"No," young Edgar replied, "I'm here with my pilot."

the largest private landowner in Canada.

Charles, the quiet, serious one, remained in Montreal; the two sisters went to Paris. Edgar moved to New York, became an American citizen. and, after a contentious apprenticeship under his father, was given command of the company's U.S. operations. Eventually, from offices hung with Rothkos and Picassos in the austere grandeur of the Seagram Building, he came to run the whole corporation. It was expected that one of his five children would do the same, but Edgar Jr. made it clear it wouldn't be him: He was in love with show business.

His father had had his own run at Hollywood in

the sixties, brief and unsuccessful. For a few minutes in 1969, he'd headed Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer; when Kirk Kerkorian took it over, he consoled himself with an independent called Sagittarius Productions. One of its first pictures was Melody, a comedy about rebellious adolescents that Edgar Ir. had found in a stack of scripts in the family's Park Avenue apartment. The best part: Edgar Jr. got to spend the summer in England working for the producer, David Puttnam.

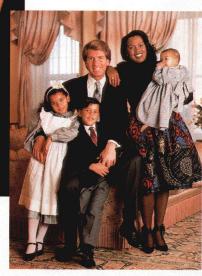
Shortly afterward, Sagittarius bankrolled Soon, a rock opera that bombed-but not before the producer, Bruce Stark, found himself reading a screenplay Edgar Jr. had written. It wasn't bad. Within months, Stark, thirty-one, and Edgar, sixteen, were developing properties together. Edgar's father put up his half of the development money, but otherwise the kid was largely on his own: Stark even had to guarantee Edgar Jr.'s first American Express card.

Back in England with Puttnam the next summer, Edgar became inexplicably obsessed with a script about seven men trapped in a bunker on D-day. Puttnam thought it hopelessly depressing, but he challenged Edgar to make the film anyway. "You learn by doing," Puttnam explains. Edgar raised the money from various sources and landed Peter Sellers to play the lead. He was a prep-school senior when The Blockhouse was released in 1973. "It wasn't a happy film," Puttnam recalls, but then Edgar wasn't a happy boy: That was also the year his parents divorced.

During their breakup, which was protracted and none too pretty, Edgar spent much of his time at Puttnam's house in the West End of London and at Stark's place in Manhattan, more than once sobbing on a sofa. After the divorce, all hell broke loose. His father went through a swinging-Edgar phase that included a whirlwind marriage to twenty-eight-year-old Lady Carolyn Townshend, Seagram's London press agent, whom he sued after the honeymoon because she refused to sleep with him. Asked why he'd chosen to bare his sex life in court, he said, "I hate to be taken"—the same reasoning

Behind Every Man...

Left: Edgar with second wife Clarissa Alcock, whom he met on a trip to Caracas. Below: With first wife Sherry Brewer and their three children.



his son would use in suing Sumner Redstone twentyone years later.

But Bronfman would pay nonetheless. In 1975, Sam IIhis firstborn, a twenty-threeyear-old ad salesman at Sports Illustrated—called to say he'd been kidnapped. The demand was \$4.6 million, later cut to \$2.3 million, which Bronfman delivered as in-

> structed. Two suspects were apprehended. In the subsequent trial, one of them testified that it had all been a hoax—that he and Sam were lovers and that they'd dreamed up this scheme to get money from Sam's father. Sam furiously denied the allegations: the defendants were found guilty-not of kidnapping but of extortion

Traumatic as the kidnapping episode was, it was also a

bonding experience for a family that badly needed one. Edgar Jr. was concerned for all of them-for Sam, for his younger sister, Holly, for his little brothers, Matthew and Adam. He began to intercede with their father to try to smooth things out. "In families, there's usually one person who's the peacemaker," says a friend. "Edgar was that person."

Having forgone college, Edgar was now a full-fledged producer, developing film properties and working with playwrights like David Mamet and Terrence McNally. "I was shocked when I found out how old he was," says McNally, whose backstage comedy Broadway, Broadway Bronfman produced in 1978. But there was no question who was really in charge. When the play was in tryouts in Philadelphia, with bad reviews piling up and a newspaper strike looming in New York, a black limousine bearing Edgar's father pulled up one night at the stage door. Edgar Jr. disappeared inside as the wipers played back and forth in the rain. When he emerged an hour later, he announced that the play was closing. McNally understood.

Some things were negotiable; others weren't. In the mid-seventies, Dionne Warwick-for whom Edgar had started writing songs-introduced him to her friend Sherry Brewer, a ravishing black actress. Edgar was struck dumb from the first instant. He wanted to marry her. His father was livid: No college, and now this? His mother convinced him to wait a year, but in November 1979 the couple eloped to New Orleans. His father threw a little cocktail party, then closed the door.

IN AN OFFICE on Wilshire Boulevard's Miracle Mile in L. A., Thom Mount reaches into a [continued on page 122]





"When we started this show in 1962, the total population of the earth was three billion one hundred million people. This summer, it is five billion five hundred million people—a net increase of two billion four hundred million people, which should give us some pause. The more amazing statistic is that half of those two billion four hundred million people will soon have their own late-night TV shows."

-Johnny Carson, in his final broadcast, May 22, 1992

VEN I HAVE HOSTED. The Kinnear boy had a movie to make, and they were letting anyone substitute-host, so they called me, and I hosted Later on NBC. The day after I hosted, I met the King, who knew what I had done. That is why he is King, even in retirement. I had dropped by his plush Santa Monica office suite, where friends of mine work, and heard his voice issue along a corridor: "I understand there's a new late-night-talk-show host in the building." So I stood before Johnny Carson, an impostor before majesty, humbled beyond human reckoning. But his eyes twinkled warmly, and he asked with genuine interest, "Did you enjoy it?" I do not recall my exact response, but I believe much stammering occurred, kind of like when I hosted.

Did I enjoy it? I am still uncertain. It is a very frenetic thing, hosting: Producers parade through your day, giving



notes, making program changes until show time, during the taped blur of which they give more notes and make more changes. Feigning impossible calm on-camera, you must engage and delight guests while juggling topics of inquiry and watching for time cues from nervous guys waving cards and fingers. Afterward, you wipe away orange makeup, apologize to network executives, and quake with surplus adrenaline unexpended. And then there are the stains. It calls to mind one early episode of HBO's fictional Larry Sanders Show in which the estimable sidekick, Hank Kingsley, was forced to stand in for his host, who had suddenly been felled by poisoned yogurt. Valiantly, Hank muddled through, then crumpled into a heap once it was over. "Man, I'm tired!" he said. "Now I know why Larry is so fucked-up!" Even the sage Jack Paar, on that famous night when he walked off his own Tonight Show, weepily postulated, "There must be a better way to make a living than this." Alas, he could not find one and returned until he could host no more, repairing finally to Connecticut, where he recovers to this day, thirty-five years hence.

To host, I will tell you, is to court cataclysm. It is high-wire business, best suited to the highly wired and the tightly wound, then televised so as to amplify all possible humiliation and also to just plain entertain. Hosting only further complicates the complicated life. So I ask: Who needs this kind of headache? For the sole purpose of journalistic endeavor, I must answer: not me. That is why I decided to become a TV sidekick.

WHEREAS A HOST MUST SPIN, a sidekick must be steadfast. Whereas a host must control, a sidekick must relax. Hosts strap their wild synapses into rigid ergonomic chairs and await incoming missiles of doom. Sidekicks get couches on which to plump and sprawl, from which to cushion disaster and think about dinner plans. Without doing much of anything, they serve and protect the poor bastard running the show. It is all about just being there for somebody. Does life behold any gesture more beautiful than this? Plus, the pay is tremendous! On his Final Night, there was Johnny Carson nodding toward the large fellow to the right of his desk, stating

Slipping on the

second-banana

peel: McMahon

described the sidekick debut

of Zehme (left)

as "less than

exhilarating."

his debt plainly: "Ed has been a rock for thirty years, sitting over here next to me."

To sit like a nearby rock! That is sidekicking, my friends. And you are all my friends, for I am a sidekick, like the great Ed McMahon, who is merely Gibraltar, friend to all and possibly even to Johnny. "Hi-yo!" Ed would say, and now so, too, do I, although I am still unclear as to what hi-yo actually means. (Something about

Clydesdales? Hmm.) Nevertheless, Ed has taught me well, for I sought out his epic wisdom and golden reminiscences. (Me: "When do you laugh?" Him: "When something is funny." Me: "Right, right.") Indeed, my quest for such intrinsic knowledge led me to the most towering fonts of experience: Hugh Downs, who genially bestrode the Paar couch; Regis Philbin, whose fame blossomed when he became Joey Bishop's most earnest foil; Jeffrey Tambor, the actor who becomes "Hey, Now!" Hank Kingsley for Larry Sanders, who is Garry Shandling; and, significantly, the last of-and perhaps best of—the breed, postmodernist Andy Richter, who flanks and anchors Conan O'Brien and redefines the role to which I aspire and he never did. "I'm not sure this is something anyone would really want to do," he told me from the start, a tad hedgingly. Eventually, his point would caress my psyche like the reaper's bony claws. Hi-yo.

rounding up horse wagons, I think. Maybe Budweiser

BUT FIRST, I NEEDED A HOST who needed me. It is, alas, a time of megalomania and insecurity among our hosts, an ungenerous era when only bandleaders are permitted to share & spotlight and faux kick, no matter that they have better things

to do. Like make music. At present, only two bona fide sidekicks work in America, and one of them isn't actually real. Desolate couches cry out for steerage. Hosts have never looked lonelier or more lost. They crane their necks hideously, unnaturally, in search of support, only to make do with the wavering attention of a distant tunesmith. They are tragic figures. I wanted to work for just such a host, one whose every on-camera twitch and pause represented desperation and woe, one who seemed to sorely need a pal, preferably one who could be seen only on cable. (Hey, I didn't need the world watching this experiment blow up in my face.)

So I went after Charles Grodin. One of our finest comic actors, he had sunk into a maudlin quagmire as host of his own nightly CNBC show. There, of late, he dodders gloomily. O. J. Simpson seemingly killed Grodin's sense of play, turned him into society's Great Lamenter, or, put simply, a mope. Often, he stares mournfully into the recesses of his studio for catatonic moments on end, as would a man in need of a defibrillator. What fun is that? I wished only to lighten his load, to buoy his hangdog spirit, to bring back the wry and mirthful Chuck Grodin who once so gamely tormented Carson and Letterman.

I faxed my proposition to his home and waited. When we later spoke on the phone, he sounded pre-Simpsonian funny again. He did twenty rollicking

minutes just on back pain. But he fretted over my selfless offer: "You know, I can't—it'll totally look like I'm doing . . . like you're sitting beside me so I can get a nice piece in Esquire," he said. "I mean, the only way this could conceivably work would be for me to spend the hour attacking you for insulting me with this offer. If you want to do that . . ." He chuckled at the idea. "I mean," he said, "I would be thrilled if I would get Charles Grodin to offend me."

But of course: All hosts must demean their sidekicks. Already, our rapport was well in place.

ESSONS BEGAN ON FLOOR NINE of 30 Rockefeller Center, Midtown Manhattan. Here was Conan wandering into Andy's office, a smoky, untidy nook whose doorplate read, TELLY SAVALAS. (Just next door, the host's placard announced occupancy of c. Conus Coneworthy, the Richest Man In Town.) Both men loomed tall, although Andy was slumped at his desk, atop of which a fragrant candle flickered. "Give me back my Silly Putty," he groaned at Conan, who ignored him and informed me, "I created the character of Andy Richter. When I found him, he was a blank slate."

"Give me my putty!" Andy repeated. Whereupon Conan lectured him while gesturing toward me: "Remember, when he asks you something, just nod like we told you. Then wait three seconds and repeat what he said in a knowing way."



Hi-yo, Richter!
"On this show,
Andy is a star,"
Conan O'Brien
says." I love him."

"Right," said Andy. Conan stepped out of the room. "He's a dick," said Andy, moving to slam the door, which he did just as Conan turned to reenter. "Asshole!" said Conan, muffled through wood. I never saw any putty.

What I saw was love. It is the kind of love few men could understand, unless they have a sidekick or are one. Said actor Alec Baldwin of the O'Brien-Richter electrolyte during one *Late Night* appearance: "You guys do seem like disengaged lovers. There's a lot of subtext." To which the brave host confessed: "It's a sexual tension." On another night, Conan told guest Larry King: "On this show, Andy is a star. I love him." King: "You love him? Why don't you two kiss each other?" (There is good reason why Larry King works alone.)

A proper sidekick will engender such love. Andy

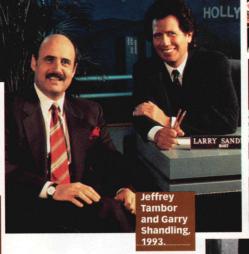
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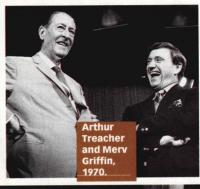












We're Number Two!

Once, they bestrode the couches, the colossi of sidekicking, these men who served and protected their hosts each night. Beginning with Hugh Downs in 1957—who started as Jack Paar's announcer suddenly every talk-show host's desk came with its own human support beam. Today, except for Andy Richter, the sidekick has sadly gone the way of-literally, in the case of Jeffrey Tambor's Hank Kingsley on The Larry Sanders Show—the bald eagle.

Richter, thirty and mordantly cherubic, is nothing if not lovable. I think I love him, but then we have shared much vodka together. (Blessedly, as Big Ed has taught us, sidekicks are guys who know how to drink.) That Conan O'Brien can publicly display couchward affection only confirms that he is the right host for a lost generation, that he is not too proud to express need of fraternity. Moreover, if he has Andy there for him, shouldn't we be there for him as well? More than three years after his rocky start on NBC and much critical thrashing, Conan today is thriving, his ratings good, his spirit and contract renewed. He offered me this salient explanation: "Having Andy creates the subliminal perception 'Well, how bad can this guy be? He's got one friend.' The crime is less heinous if you've got someone else there helping you who looks sane. Like you have an accomplice."

I TURNED NOW TO THE FIRST such accomplice who mattered: Hugh Downs, who forged this craft amid frenzy and looked sane best. From 1957 to 1962, he was there for Jack Paar, broadcast dramatist nonpareil, whose writhing emotions ripped through television screens. Paar bled and Downs mopped. Paar cried and Downs comforted. "It was like riding a bronco," Downs recalled, not unaffectionately, when I phoned him at his ABC-TV lair, where he presides as coanchor of the newsmagazine 20/20. "Every night, you didn't know what was going to happen, and it always did."

Ed McMahon

Johnny

Carson,

Before Downs, sidekicking was an ephemeral thing, an ensemble art spread among a broadcast family of oddballs taking turns at support. Jack Benny had his antic regulars, as did Steve Allen on the first Tonight Show, as did Paar, for that matter. But Paar also had Hugh Downs, his announcer (as every classic sidekick would thereafter be, up until Andy Richter), who hovered on the outskirts, bursting with keen knowledge, which Paar prized. "If you ask Hugh what time it is, he'll tell you how the watch works," the host often joshed. Indeed, Paar asked many things of Downs, not least of which was eventually to sit beside the desk, where no announcer had sat before! (Paar! Father of the Form!)

"He had this idea," Downs said, laying the Stone Tablet before me. "He'd call me over and I'd sit in the chair, and when the first guest came in, I'd greet the guest along with him and move down to the couch and keep moving down throughout the night. That is still done, and nobody's improved on it." (As

Ed would later tell me, "I always knew when I hit the end of the couch, the show was over." Yes! The sidekick's curb feeler!)

So there sat Downs, the Columbus of Couch, charting territory unexplored, wondering what to do with himself. Some nights, he did nothing: "I'd go home and think, God, I'm just not earning my keep. Then I learned that it wasn't important that I be in there trying to make a big contribution every time." He learned that proximity was all, that proximity bonded men plenty. This, of course, was both the rapture and the pity of the role. But many a night (and more than anyone else, even a youth named Carson), he filled in for Paar, including the historic night Paar took his on-air powder-the Great Walk-Off-triggered by network censorship of his legendary water-closet joke from the night before. He told no other person except Downs that he was leaving ahead of time.

"The surprise to me was that he left at the beginning of the show!" he said, still amazed. But, true to his host, Downs plowed on with the program and becalmed a nation stunned. "I'll tell you, it was probably the hottest

spotlight I was ever in, before or since."

WENT OFF TO ANNOY my friend Regis Philbin, something I have done countless times since I profiled him three years ago in this magazine. He is most fun when annoyed. As the announcer for ABC's Joey Bishop Show (1967-1969), however, he never bristled on-camera. Rather, he was Regis carefree: freshly into his thirties, a hurricane of pep gusting into the sleepy sails of his low-key host. Enthusing was his racket. For the annals, he is the only sidekick ever to become a giant among talk hosts. But his work as Bishop's knight nevertheless remains unforgettable. It was the one time more energy stirred from the couch than from the desk.

He has kept but a few old show tapes, and I had asked to watch one with him-thus the annoyance. "The sidekick is a relic of the talk-show business!" he moaned, as he will, leading me into an edit bay at Live with Regis & Kathie Lee headquarters. The tape was dated June 11, 1968, just one month before Regis walked off the show, à la Paar, crushed by rumors that the network felt he hurt ratings. (He was back the next week, embarrassed but beloved more than ever. "I slipped on my second-banana peel," he admitted

three decades later.) Now, on the monitor, he saw himself, a man-child with complexion aglow, voice of cotton, hollering (even then), "And now, ladies and gentlemen, it's time for Joey!"

We watched Bishop lope out, peering through drooped eyelids, and begin: "That's what I like, folks, a sitting ovation." In lieu of telling his usual joke or Couch potatoes: A good sidekick, says McMahon, knows when to be in and when to be out-even if he's out cold.

two (never more), he asked that people stop sending him cakes. Then he teased young Philbin about his recent record album, It's Time for Regis! (Sidekicks, alas, have sung in their spare time, McMahon and Hank Kingsley among them.) At which point, Regis rushed over from the wings, all afire, with a topic for Bishop to traverse: "Time to dip into the mailbag!" ("Every night, I had to come up with something different," he told me now, shaking his head. "Joey never knew what it would be. Didn't want to know! He would just counterpunch, his specialty. But if it didn't pay off or wasn't cute, it was my fault.") After this, Regis performed

ear Edistofeel

his regular surreal task of trying to excite Bishop about the guest lineup: "What a show I've got for you! The funniest man alive, one of your dearest pals—Buddy Hackett is here!"

"Feeding him was my job," he said, shutting off the tape. "But you had to know your place. You couldn't be funnier than him. It was important to me that he get his laughs. On the other hand, the perception of me was that of an inconsequential, trivial kind of guy. It was a tightrope act."

TO PREPARE FOR MY ROLE, I became Andy Richter's offcamera sidekick for many days. I knew my place and tried not to be funnier than him. Also, I fed him and his wife, Sarah, at their favorite French-Alsatian haunt. We consumed many exotic potions, and I prompted him to recount amusing anecdotes. Like his triumphant first meeting with Conan, at Junior's Deli in west Los Angeles: Andy ordered borscht, whose sheer purpleness amazed the nascent host, and also a misshapen knish. "It had a knob on top of it," he recalled, "and when the waitress set it down, I said, 'Man, check that out! It looks like a tit!' That was the big icebreaker." Eventually, he was unafraid to climb in and out of his show clothes in front of me. When he aired his life concerns, I listened with empathy, and, at certain such moments, if he was wearing a shirt, my hand fell easily on his shoulder.

For instance, he told me of his [continued on page 126]





BY PAUL JOHNSON

Travelgate and Troopergate were the work of Bill Clinton's enemies, right? And Whitewater and Filegate, too. And Gennifer Flowers and Paula Jones, draft dodging and not inhaling, Webster Hubbell, John Huang, and Indogate. Is Clinton the most disreputable president ever? It seems that way to one historian.

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The scandals that have emerged since the beginning of President Clinton's second term threaten him with personal tragedy. The question now is whether the mess will develop into a national tragedy, too. What do Bill Clinton's vivid ethical failings tell us about the state of the presidency and the moral condition of America?

On the first point, there can be no doubt that Clinton has already seriously damaged the office. Ronald Reagan did an outstanding job of restoring public confidence and pride in the presidency after the trauma of the 1970s, and George Bush, whatever his other failings, kept the honor of the White House during his term. Under Clinton, an impression of

ILLUSTRATION BY MATT MAHURIN

tawdriness and lack of principle has spread outward from the Oval Office like the distorting ripples of a dirty stone

dropped in a sunlit pool.

More important is the second point. Clinton's appearance on the stage at this moment in history says a great deal about the dulled moral sensibility of the American people and what appears to be a growing cynicism about public life. Despite Clinton's tarnished image, he was comfortably reelected, primarily because he smiled more than the dismal Bob Dole and spent a great deal of money-much of it, we now discover, ill-gotten.

It was clear from the start that Clinton would be a high-risk choice for president. I remember thinking to myself in 1992, It is inconceivable that a man who has got himself elected governor of Arkansas five times could be an entirely honest man. He was indeed extraordinarily lucky, nominated from among a thin Democratic field and elected against an incumbent of unusual ineptitude. His ethical troubles began very early in his first term and have continued to multiply and intensify ever since.

First came his alleged wrongdoings before he became president, centering on the Whitewater case but including a large number of other matters concerning women or even the use of an airfield in Arkansas for drug running. Then came the various charges of criminal behavior by Clinton or his staffers during his first term, including extremely serious allegations of obstruction of justice after the death of White House deputy counsel Vince Foster and the misuse of FBI and other confidential

government files for political purposes.

Although the multiplicity of the accusations against Clinton is confusing and tends to deaden the impact of any particular one, the sheer variety of the charges (and it is an awesome curriculum vitae) and the fact that scarcely a day goes by without adding to them also have a cumulative effect. No other erring American president was ever bombarded from so many different moral directions. The number and weight of the complaints about the president's conduct threaten to reach a critical mass, when there will take place an explosion of public rage of such force as to blow Clinton out of Washington.

The latest additions to the Clinton canon of delinquency are the most lethal—the methods employed by him and his associates to raise enormous sums of money for his reelection campaign. The Whitewater scandal is too complicated for most people to understand and almost impossible to summarize. The public is inclined to dismiss it: "That sort of thing goes on; so what?" Most of the stories about women are of little significance. The late Pamela Harriman probably got it right when she jested, "Bill Clinton was born with a silver zipper in his hand." Paula Jones may prove to be an exception, however: She is not a floozy but a serious, wronged woman, and I suspect she will be able to persuade jurors to take her word rather than the president's if she ever gets her day in court. There is evidence that Clinton himself is afraid of this determined woman.

However, the problem with these types of allegations is that there are too many separate items. The public cannot cope. And the confusion has been compounded by the media's irritating habit of adding gate to each

matter. Faced with not only Whitewatergate but Troopergate, Filegate, Travelgate, and Haircutgate, to name a few, the average reader turns the page. Clinton's biggest ally is the nation's short attention span. And on most of the counts, it is not easy to answer the question, "What exactly did the president do wrong?"

The fundraising issue, however, is quite different. The charge that the president desecrated the Lincoln Bedroom, allowing rich folk to sleep in it in return for donations to the Democratic National Committee, is simple and outrageous. Such an act can be visualized and cartooned. Everyone can grasp its enormity. This and other dirty-money innovations are the charges that, if they can be made to stick, will sink Clinton.

here is no real precedent

for the charges now being brought against Bill Clinton. Of course, various presidential elections have provoked doubts about the validity of their results. Richard Nixon believed to his dying day that the 1960 election was stolen from him as a result of voting fraud by the Democrats in both Illinois and Texas. But, as he told me, he did not hold Kennedy personally responsible (though Kennedy certainly knew of the fraud in Illinois, organized by the Daley machine in Chicago). Nixon decided not to challenge the result in the courts for many reasons, the chief one being that the overturning of a presidential result would plunge the country into an interregnum and would be against the national interest. Another was that there is no constitutional procedure for contesting the legality of a presidential election. Even today, if Clinton is found guilty of illegal fundraising, there is no question of invalidating his election: He would have to resign or be impeached.

In more general terms, Clinton measures up badly in the ethical pattern of the American presidency. Considering all the temptation, and the huge scale and openness of the American economy, most of the fortytwo American presidents have been remarkably honest in money matters. The early presidents were all men of honor, though sometimes improvident. Thomas Jefferson accumulated a mountain of debt but never stole a cent. James Monroe borrowed money from John Jacob Astor

in a way that would now raise eyebrows, but that was as far as it went. Chester Arthur was a crook as the customs collector for the port of New York, though, oddly enough, once in the White House, he not only behaved honestly but pushed through reforms of the spoils system. Ulysses S. Grant ran perhaps the most dishonest administration in American history but did so more out of ignorance, innocence, and folly than out of turpitude. Not only did he receive nothing from the depravities of his associates, he was defrauded by them in turn and rendered penniless.

It was a similar story under Warren Harding. He has

gone down in popular memory as the man who presided over the Teapot Dome scandal and as the head of the Ohio Gang. It is true that several members of his Cabinet were dishonest; one went to jail, one committed suicide to avoid it. But since Harding's private papers became available, the most minute research has failed to discover any financial wrongdoing on his part, and the latest biography, published last year, presents Harding as the victim of malicious mythology. Harry Truman, too, had a few unworthy associates. During his second term, there were a large number of Washington scandals, particularly in the Internal Revenue Service. But Truman was not personally involved in any of them. Indeed, for a man who owed his rise in politics to the notorious Pendergast machine in Kansas City, Missouri, he showed an extraordinary capacity for keeping his hands clean. His career, in marked contrast to Bill Clinton's, demonstrates that it is possible to come to political maturity in a habitually crooked state and still preserve one's integrity.

The one personally corrupt president of modern times was Lyndon Johnson. The fortune he amassed—in real estate. radio, and other interests-arose from his willingness to use his

political clout to get contracts for local Texan interests, particularly in defense work, and the payoffs in money or kind he received in return. He was certainly guilty of illegalities in fundraising, too, though long before he ran for president. During the Second World War, Johnson, in efforts to get himself elected senator from Texas, involved himself, along with some of his business cronies, in a maze of fundraising irregularities and tax fraud. The IRS was hot on his trail, and LBJ would undoubtedly have gone to jail if the investigation had

continued. But Franklin Roosevelt regarded Johnson as the ablest young Democratic politician in the South and a possible successor. On the afternoon of 13 January 1944, the president summoned the assistant secretary of the treasury to the White House and ordered the IRS investigation to cease. The matter was settled by a negotiated fine, with no indictment, no trial, and no publicity.

This campaign-funds tax fraud was only one instance that nearly brought him to grief. The other occurred just as he was about to succeed Kennedy as president, when his close aide and Senate official Bobby Baker was

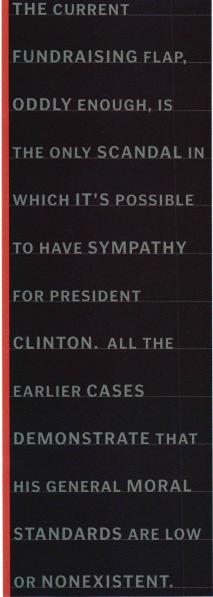
investigated (and eventually jailed) for numerous corrupt activities. LBJ was undoubtedly involved, and a full and objective investigation would probably have led to his impeachment and degradation. Fortunately for him, the Democrats controlled the Senate, and his good friend and ally Senator Sam Ervin, who was in charge, prevented vital witnesses from being examined and ensured that Johnson survived—in flagrant contrast to the way Ervin pursued Richard Nixon with a selfrighteous and moralizing venom during the Watergate hearings a decade later.

LBJ may have been a scoundrel, but he was also one of the most formidable presidents in American history. His ability to drive legislation through Congress has never been equaled, and the structure of the federal social services today, with all their merits and weaknesses, is largely his doing. This is a fact that historians recognize and voters ought to take into account: Great administrative ability and low ethical standards often go hand in hand.

This was also true of Richard Nixon, forced to resign in August 1974 as the only alternative to being impeached. Nixon was not corrupt in a financial sense, though some of his colleagues, and especially his vicepresident, Spiro Agnew, were on the take-Agnew in spectacular fashion. The Nixon campaign was also accused of illegal fundraising. But the real charge against Nixon and his staff was the abuse of presidential power and, more specifically, the use of executive authority to impede the judicial process. In the end, the claim that Nixon had, in Othello's words, "done the state some service" counted for little against the reality of this abuse of power, for which the White

House tapes provided prima facie evidence.

Oddly enough, the current fundraising scandal is the only one of the lot in which it is possible to have sympathy for President Clinton. All the earlier cases demonstrate that Clinton's general moral standards are low or nonexistent. He seems to lie easily and fluently when cornered, and he seems to have had no scruples about using his office to enrich himself and his friends. But the fault is not primarily his if the sacred precincts of the White House were violated to raise campaign funds.



In the first place, Clinton is not responsible for the astronomical rise in the cost of running for national office or for the lamentable failure of Congress to tackle the problem. In the fifteen years after 1974, for instance, the average cost of winning a House seat rose to \$273,881 from \$119,916, and the cost of a Senate seat to \$2.8 million from less than \$1 million. Presidential campaigns followed the same upward curve. This campaign inflation tends to favor the Republicans, who have a far stronger appeal to rich companies and individuals. Thus, in 1984, for example, the Republican National Committee raised

\$298 million, the Democrats only \$98 million. The 1974 amendments to the Federal Election Campaign Act, passed in an attempt to deal with the problem, actually made things worse by weakening the parties and forcing individual candidates, including presidential contenders, to rely more

on personal fundraising.

It is no defense to say that campaign money is not the only factor in winning U.S. elections. In most cases, it is the determining factor. Recent research into the political career of John F. Kennedy, for example, shows that from his entry into Congress to his presidential victory in 1960, the dispensing of money by his billionaire father, both lawfully and otherwise, often in prodigious amounts, was the essential element in JFK's success.

The need for enormous quantities of money explains the terrific pressure put on Clinton, as president, to comply with the demands of the Democratic National Committee. Clinton has always been a good campaigner, but he hated the fundraising business, or most of it. He complained to one aide, "You've got me running all around the country, and all I do is run in and out of hotel rooms. I'm not having any real contact with any of these people [potential donors]. All I'm doing is sitting there shaking hands." In his book, Behind the Oval Office. Dick Morris quotes Clinton's fierce complaints against what he was

being made to do: "You don't have any remote idea how hard I have to work. . . . I can't think. I can't act. I can't do anything but go to fundraisers and shake hands. You want me to issue executive orders; I can't focus on a thing

except the next fundraiser."

Such self-pitying remarks will not be accepted, of course, by congressional committees as they begin their investigations into fundraising irregularities, whether these arise from misuse of the White House or from secret deals with, say, communist China. A president is paid by citizens to govern the country as chief executive, not to raise funds. If he neglects his official work to go to fundraisers, as Clinton seems to have admitted doing, he is guilty of a constitutional misdemeanor even if most of these events were perfectly legal in themselves. And if the events were also unlawful, then the misdemeanor could well be defined as a "high crime," as required for an impeachment process. That the president yielded to pressure is no excuse in law.

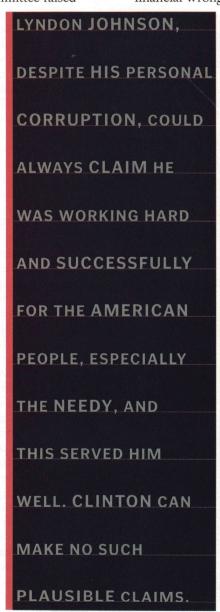
Bill Clinton's problem is that he is accused of financial wrongdoing as well as abuse of power. By this is

meant the use of his official authority to promote personal political ends. Clinton seems to have done this on a number of occasions—by making improper use of FBI files, for instance. His further problem, as the various investigations now get under way, is that his positive achievements so far do not seem to weigh much in the moral balance against his shortcomings. And before we come to them, it is important to take note that Clinton has done himself a lot of damage with the public by bringing the White House itself, and the use made of it, into the ethical debate. Americans are very sensitive about the White House and have always been so. They are by nature an egalitarian people, and while recognizing that their president and First Citizen must live in suitable grandeur, they have always been very inquisitive and suspicious about the use made of the executive mansion.

Even George Washington was criticized for his excessively formal dinner parties and receptions. That was why Thomas Jefferson made such a point of scaling down the ceremony and making the official residence open to all. He invited visitors to Washington to call on him without appointment and saw them if he possibly could. He also answered all letters in his own hand, often at considerable length. John Quincy Adams, though a curmudgeonly man, also received all respectably dressed callerssome of whom tried to borrow moneyand recorded their meetings in his copious diary. He took a daily swim, naked, in the Potomac, a practice that does not seem to have disturbed

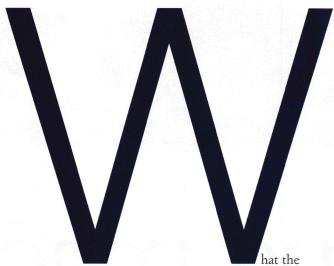
Washingtonians, though the supporters of his opponent, Andrew Jackson, who kept sharp eyes on everything that went on in the White House, fiercely accused Adams of spending public money on what they called "gambling furniture" there. This turned out to be a billiard table and a chess set, both of which the indignant president swore he had paid for himself.

The notion that the White House is an "American home"-albeit on an elevated scale-and therefore sacred is strong among the citizenry. The voters have probably been



happiest when they have been able to see it as a family residence rather than a mere place of government—during the times when, for instance, Theodore Roosevelt and Kennedy actually raised children there who could be seen playing in the gardens. The great strength of the modern British monarchy, at least until recently, was that it was a family, with whom people could identify, and Americans, too, have responded to the occupants of the White House most warmly when their ordinariness has made itself felt.

The needs of modern security have destroyed any real intimate contact between the White House family and the nation. But it is astonishing how recently the White House was comfortably accessible. In the early 1920s, Warren Harding was happy to answer the front door himself, and every Sunday he rode a horse through the streets of Washington, lifting his hat to those who greeted him. Coolidge answered the front door, too, though he was quite capable of shutting it in the face of an unwelcome visitor. One of the counts against Herbert Hoover, especially as the Great Depression worsened, was that he was too formal and unfriendly; he did not come out to shake hands and insisted on dressing for dinner, even when just dining alone with his wife. The great strength of the Kennedys, despite JFK's womanizing, was that they somehow made the White House seem a home, and one in which gifted, artistic, and remarkable people were cherished. We now all know that Camelot was painted lath and plaster, but it seemed wonderfully real at the time, and most Americans were delighted that the White House was an admired cynosure of the world's eyes.



Democratic fundraisers forced Bill Clinton to do in the White House looks very much like sacrilege committed against a cherished national shrine and indeed against one of the basic principles of family life—unpaid hospitality. In the first place, for the Clinton White House to offer paid entertainment for the benefit of one political party seems like blatant financial abuse of a state institution financed by taxpayers of all political allegiances. What is even more offensive is the penetration by these posses of contributors to the inner, intimate recesses of the building, reserved for the First Family alone. The sheer scale of the operation is itself hard to swallow. The fact that Clinton could authorize it, even if reluctantly, shows

the extent to which his moral nerve endings became blunted during those long years in Arkansas politics. Indeed, it makes one suspect they were never very sensitive in the first place. The real ethical case against Clinton, I fear, is that he is not so much consciously wicked as merely amoral, a man unaware of sharp distinctions between right and wrong.

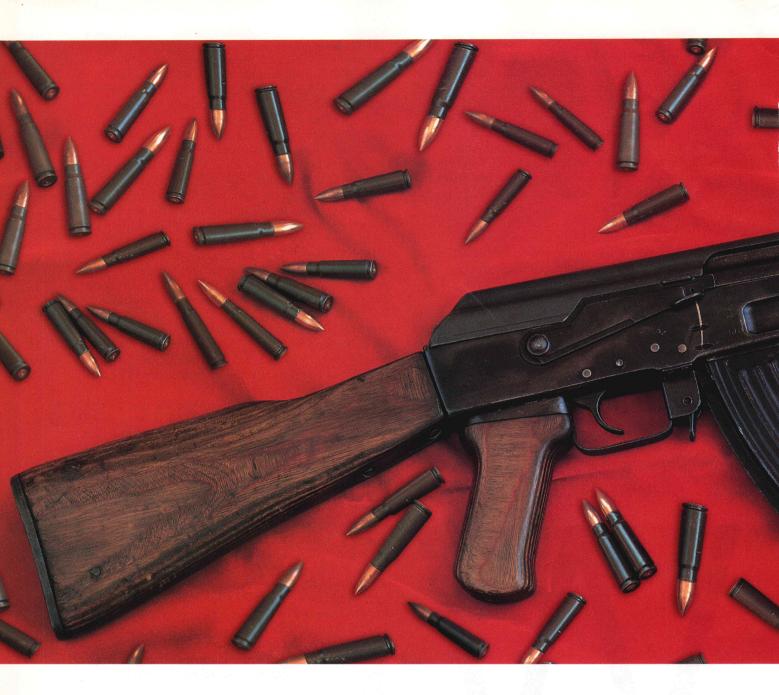
Which brings us to the redeeming quality of the president's performance. LBJ, amid all his skulduggery, could always claim he was working hard and successfully for the American people, especially for the needy, and this served him well until he was swallowed up in the catastrophe of Vietnam. Clinton can make no such plausible claims. His legislative record so far is poor, almost derisory. Abroad, Clinton has failed comprehensively to make a distinctive mark. There is one exception: He has fought vigorously and successfully for free trade. Otherwise, he seems to stand for no great principle or cause, and his reactions to events, whether in the Balkans or the Middle East and the Gulf, have been merely opportunistic. When Clinton is confronted with an overseas problem, his first instinct seems to be, Are there any American votes in it for me?

All this will have to change. With the best part of four years to go, Clinton seems likely to have to spend most of his time locked into investigations of his ethics and to become a disliked and ignored lame-duck president long before his natural time. And to entertain themselves, members of Congress casually toss around the word impeachment. The likelihood of an impeachment, though not negligible, is certainly not strong, either. The process, provided for in the Constitution, is complex. Impeachable offenses are defined as "Treason, Bribery, or other high Crimes and Misdemeanors." This covers a wide range of offenses, and there is no doubt that some of the accusations leveled against Clinton, if true, would qualify as impeachable. But it would require a marked erosion of Democratic support to push the indictment through the House, let alone to secure a verdict against him in the Senate.

And the record of impeachments is not encouraging. Since 1789, the House has impeached fifteen officials. The only president to be impeached, Andrew Johnson, got off when his Senate critics failed to secure the necessary two-thirds-majority vote. But to impeach Clinton would be to paralyze the administration for months on end. That was why Richard Nixon honorably resigned rather than subject the country and the world to such risks. Clinton, should it come to it, would have to be persuaded to do the same. But he does not strike one

as either a quitter or an honorable man.

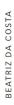
So the most likely outcome seems to be a protracted lame-duck existence. Clinton's one hope of escaping from this slow political death is to demonstrate, in actions, not words, that he is capable of turning the presidency itself into a moral force, at home and abroad. Can he do it? His personal ethical record suggests it is beyond his power. But stranger things have happened in American presidential history. What is clear is that without such a seizing of the moral initiative, the Clinton presidency will slowly sink into the quagmire of shame, and all Americans will be the losers. 12

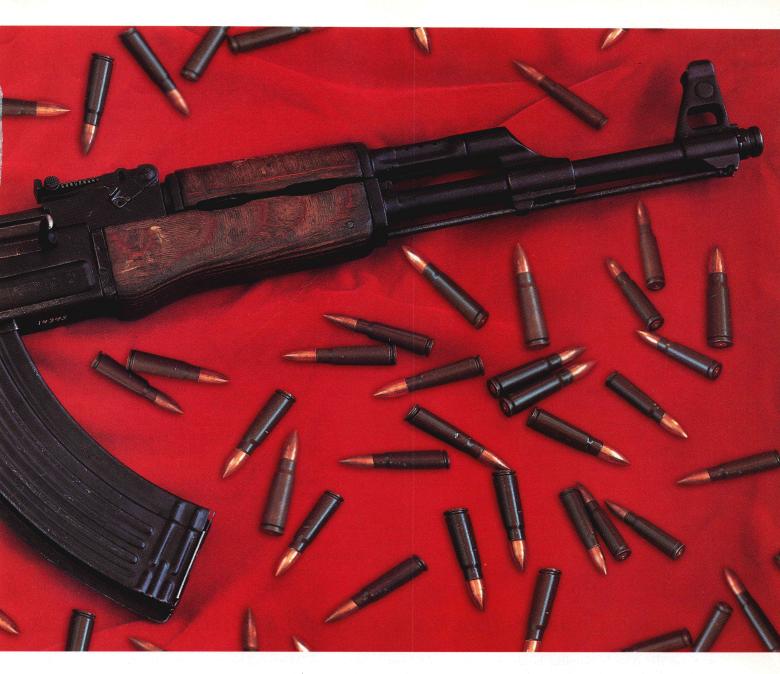


(the killing mac

BY GUY MARTIN

Fifty years ago, a Soviet soldier named Kalashnikov gave the world the assault rifle. Now, fifty-five million AK-47's later, the Soviet Union is gone, guerrilla warfare rules, and that soldier is an old man who hasn't been paid in three months. A dispatch, from Russia with blood.







The way men kill, both on and off the field of battle, changed fundamentally a half century ago, when the Central Artillery Administration of the USSR adopted the automat Kalashnikova 1947, or the AK-47, as the standardissue weapon for the Soviet army. The gun became the tool of the fractured proxy wars and brushfires of our half of the century. To date, there have been fifty-five million Kalashnikovs made, more than any other firearm in history.

The Kalashnikov is a most communal weapon, made of stamped and welded sheet metal with high tolerances—in other words, with crudeness built in. It can be cleaned with a pebble shoved down the barrel. The Soviets threw handfuls of dust and gravel into them and dragged them on ropes behind jeeps before taking them to the testing range. The guns had to be designed that way; they were made for an army that faced every condition but had no resources. Kalashnikovs have decided the fates of nations by enabling people who could not afford to determine the shape of a battlefield to decide where war was possible.

Because even the oldest AK-47's rarely malfunction, because a Zairean or Khmer or Liberian child can break them down, they hold their battlefield value no matter how little they cost-in short, they keep on killing. Thus Kalashnikovs flow around the world on the market principles of blood chaos, like a swarm of bees after nectar.

The Kalashnikov was the weapon of choice in the 1972 Black September attack on the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics; in the 1972 Japanese Army of the Red Star attack on Lod airport; in the 1981 assassination of Anwar Sadat; in the 1989 killing of five schoolchildren in Stockton, California; in the 1995 attempted assassination of Sadat's successor, Hosni Mubarak; in the Tupac Amaru embassy raid in Lima, Peru, last Christmas.

The AK moves adroitly from hand to hand. The Soviets once supplied Kalashnikovs to the Ugandans, who supplied the Tutsi in Rwanda, who now supply Laurent Kabila's rebels in Zaire. About six million guns are in Mozambique, left behind after two decades of civil war. A similar daisy chain swirls through the Middle East. First, the Soviets built a Kalashnikov factory in Egypt and armed the Syrians. Egypt, Syria, and other Arab states supplied the PLO. In idle moments during the 1970s, al-Fatah trained West German Red Army Faction cadres with Kalashnikovs at camps in Jordan, then ran their surplus to the IRA. In Lebanon in the 1980s, Iran supplied Amal and the Hezbollah. The Iraqis supplied their Lebanese puppets. Then everybody settled down to fight the Israelis, whose troops, like Americans in Vietnam, routinely exchanged their rifles for captured Kalashnikovs.

Official America loved the AK, too: In 1982, the CIA chose the Kalashnikov to arm the mujahideen in Afghanistan, and four hundred thousand AKs were fed into the country through Pakistan. The Soviets had by then introduced lightcaliber AKs with greater accuracy and range, which, since the CIA had no new stock, became trophies for the mujahideen. The only way to get one was to kill a Russian.

The street price for a Kalashnikov is a function of availability versus the demand for killing. On the Thailand-Cambodia border, where the Khmer Rouge are tired and hungry, an AK costs \$10; in Chechnya during the height of the fighting, demoralized Russian conscripts would sell their weapons to the Chechens, who were killing them, for tence, pointed as a shard of flint: "You could have come at a more convenient time of year."

Basically, no time of year would be convenient for him. We have come to see Kalashnikov because he is the selftaught prodigy who created one of the classic artifacts of war. He has spent more than fifty of his seventy-seven years cosseted in Brezhnevian reality, in locked arms-production cities, surrounded by work, family, and colleagues-period. In the last six years, a Pandora's box has opened for him, as it has for many of the old order. His beloved State, his livelihood, and his town have bled away. This has not made him happy. As he said modestly during our protracted negotiations for this visit: "It's not good for me to see strangers."

Kalashnikov is a small, regal man. He stands no more than five two, in a pair of iridescent-blue jogging pants, a shawl-collared sweater, and Wal-Mart-issue camp sandals. In spite of his elfin figure and his shopworn voice, he has drawn about him an almost cartoonish Russian gravity out of the nineteenth century. It is as if he wore an opera cloak.

It's New Year's Eve in Izhevsk, one of several rotting industrial capitals in the border country between Europe and Siberia. Kalashnikov should by rights be resting in anticipation of the long march through soup and pickles and rolled roast moose to the nether parts of the evening, but he isn't well. Chronic nerve degeneration has numbed his right forearm and the heel of his right hand. Today, he wears a foam collar to keep from pinching the nerve's inflamed trunk.

It vexes him to skew his holiday around us. He can't deny it: He has allowed an American and a suspiciously refined young Muscovite, strangers of obviously traitorous intent, to violate the threshold of his spare three-room sanctum on Soviet Street. He takes us into the living room and sits in a chair next to the oven. He offers us nothing.

Kalashnikov's living room is done in old-Soviet-man trinket style, arranged in strata: a layer of post-USSR travels-a commemorative platter from American gunmaker Bill Ruger, a fur-trimmed ceremonial Indian drum from the

The AK price list: In Iraqi Kurdistan, \$17; Chechnya, \$150; southwest L. A., \$500;

\$150; on the Angola-Namibia border in 1995, an AK cost \$13.80; in East New York, the toughest precinct in Brooklyn, in April 1997, \$600; among the gangs in southwest Los Angeles, \$500; in Iraqi Kurdistan, \$17.

On its fiftieth birthday, this elegant gun is the deadliest personal weapon made by man.

The gun's inventor stands before us. Mikhail Timofeievich Kalashnikov wants to make sure that we hang our coats properly. My translator, Kirill Koriukin, and I take off our boots, flinging stray bits of snow onto the mat. Kalashnikov hovers about to monitor the disrobing procedure, punctuating his curmudgeonly welcome dance with short keening sounds in his old-woman's falsetto: ehsht, yehsht... mmmmm, ehsht.

He cannot hear-deafness brought on by a half century of blasting away with his beloved assault rifles on the gun ranges of what was, in its rough glory, the Soviet motherland. Today, out of puckishness, out of pride, the great gun designer is not wearing his hearing aid, forcing us to shout.

Thank you so much for receiving us!

Then the tiny, pale voice with its first real sen-

American West—and beneath that a more authentic exhibit of Russian life. Across the room from Kalashnikov's chair is an oil portrait of him in his best Supreme Soviet sack suit. Underneath, on the Khrushchev-era hi-fi cabinet, two miniature AK-47's are propped barrel-up.

We have brought a knife for Kalashnikov to add to his museum, a Buck folding hunter with brass bolsters and simple wooden scales. He collects knives and, as one might imagine, guns. Kalashnikov opens the Buck with a tight smile but doesn't have the strength in either thumb to press the release at the back of the handle. He passes it back to me to close. His bad hand has a fine, birdlike tremor.

He gets up and walks back to one of the bedrooms. He returns with a copper fifty-ruble piece, worth about a cent, and hands it to me with the same sharp smile.

"It is bad luck to accept things with blades as gifts," he says, enjoying my lack of household superstition.

Nikolai Nikolaievich Shkliaiev arrives with a woman in her mid-forties who immediately begins bustling about in the kitchen. We are to be served something. Shkliaiev is a strapping former Soviet-army procurement colonel who in retirement has become Kalashnikov's Sancho Panza.

"I have been to America five times," Kalashnikov says. The sudden display of his post-1990 world-traveler credentials is, I think, a bald grab at sophistication but remarkably keen. He knows what a couple of Westerners might be liable to think here in his living room. He rattles off a few of his visits to America with what could be called the plain-front-khaki crowd: He was invited by the Ruger family to the NRA convention in Salt Lake City; he twice attended the SHOT Show, the annual gun-sports convention in Texas; he was invited to Washington, D. C., and then on a turkey hunt in Virginia by Edward Ezell, the late Smithsonian military historian; he became friends with Eugene Stoner, the designer of the M16.

A Siberian husky, fine-boned and blue-eved, bounds into the room from the foyer, followed by a red-nosed fiftyish man who presses a pink toy bull into my hands, then

wishes me a good New Year.

"It's the year of the bull," he says quickly, meaning the Chinese year of the ox. "We will hope to get lots more calves." He means willing country girls.

Colonel Shkliaiev yells the joke into Kalashnikov's ear,

and it seems to loosen things up a bit.

This is Yuri Konstantinovich Koloskov, master of the local hunting society. Izhevsk is a city of passionate hunters; there were a dozen hunting and fishing chandlers here prior to 1991. Having hunted since boyhood, I'd written Kalashnikov that I would like to hunt with him. Of course, right now the bear are sleeping, the boar and the moose are out of season, and it's 28 below, centigrade, but that does not deter the ultrafriendly Koloskov.

"Udmurtiya has the best hunting in Russia!" he says. "I will guarantee you a most unusual time!"

Our New Year's Eve lunch is ready. We sit in the kitchen at the plastic-covered breakfast table under a bad painting of some heron. Kalashnikov and his courtiers are on one side, and the foreign threat, my translator and I, are on the other. It is a cold hunter's

East New York, Brooklyn, \$600.

lunch, a lunch for old military men who prefer not to relinquish military rigor. There are pickles, cheese, bread, and cold roast moose jaw in aspic. There are no plates.

Colonel Shkliaiev pours us a ceremonial round of Kalashnikov vodka from an extraordinary bottle with the designer in full scowl on the label and a black AK on the cap. The toasts are brisk and appropriately trite. Kalashnikov welcomes the visitors who have come from so far away.

"You are making me start my New Year's early," he grumbles. He means it.

Kalashnikov was born on November 10, 1919, the sixteenth of seventeen children, to a pair of kulaks in the village of Kuriya, in the Altai Republic, in southern Siberia. His mother was semiliterate. Ten of his brothers and sisters died in the famines and subsequent epidemics that swept Russia in the 1920s and 1930s. As a boy, Kalashnikov was a tinkerer who could not stay still unless he was making or improving something; his first pistol, which he made at the age of ten, fired matchsticks.

He dropped out of the village school because, as he tells

it, he had found and was renovating an old Browning pistol and was about to be arrested. He left home to begin work in neighboring Kazakhstan for the Turkistan-Siberian railway, part of the crash industrialization of the thirties. He was drafted in 1939 as an armorer and, at twenty, invented a fuel gauge that was put into production.

Kalashnikov was thrown into the breach as a lowly tank sergeant when the Germans began their feckless push east in the summer of 1941. He was wounded that fall in western Russia during an ugly cannon-to-cannon tank rout on the Bryansk front. A panzer round scored a direct hit on his tank. He took shrapnel in his left shoulder and his chest. He and his crew managed to extricate themselves from the crippled T-34, but he went untreated for a week because they had to fight back to their own lines. He was twenty-one.

The invention of the AK-47 can be traced directly to the wounds inflicted by that panzer gunner; the convalescence took the young inventor out of the war and gave him time to think. Kalashnikov started sketching his first submachine gun in the hospital. His wounds were serious enough to require a six-month leave in Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, where he'd worked on the railway. He asked his colleagues if they'd help him produce a prototype submachine gun, an astonishingly bold, young-Henry Ford move at virtually any moment in Soviet history but particularly so during the war. He had no engineering degree and no sponsor in the Kremlin, but he managed to turn out two guns. It was 1942.

The army rejected that design, but he was assigned to the

Kalashnikov at home in Izhevsk with his namesake weapon, minus the universally recognized banana clip.



Aviation Institute firearms lab in Kazakhstan. Kalashnikov had declared himself a designer with nothing but an act of volition; the government had conceded the point. He married, had a son, Viktor, and started churning out designs in an actual office. In 1943, he was given some new 7.62 cartridges and asked to come up with an automatic rifle to match them. Four years later, this gun would be the AK-47; in 1949, the first production of the gun would be moved here, to Izhevsk.

For the fifty years of the cold war, Izhevsk was one of the places the Soviets put things they wanted nobody to find. The notorious gulag Perm-36 is a hundred miles north; the

locked nuclear city of Chelyabinsk-70 is to the south. Izhevsk lies on the western slopes of the Urals, Yukon-rough log buildings listing in the center of town, ruled more by Siberia, just over the hills, than by Moscow six hundred miles away.

Today, Izhevsk is in trouble. In 1991, the Izhevsk Machine Works, or "Izhmash," employed fifty thousand people. Now there are thirty thousand, more than half of whom are part-time or on what is called "forced vacation." As we visit him, Kalashnikov himself, who is semiretired, has not been paid in three months. Military small arms, the bread and butter of Izhmash, are not being made here now. There is a thriving black market for untraceable guns to be used in contract killings, however; five cells of Izhmash engineers have been caught moonlighting as mob gunmakers.

On the international market, the rifle suffers from old-Soviet mismanagement, a factor of its blistering success on the battlefield combined with decades of wild, Stalinistic economics by decree. This compounds the starvation of Izhevsk. As the cold war built to a crescendo in the fifties, the Soviets began erecting gun factories in China, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia, among others. Production, not money, was hegemony. Nonallied countries—notably Finland and Israel put out their versions. Now Izhevsk competes for new sales with the Czech, Bulgarian, and, worst of all, Chinese models.

Kalashnikov is still furious at Yisrael Galili, the late de-

Le Bourget, France, in June; Ankara again in August; Bangkok again in October; Malaysia at the end of the year.

Kalashnikov is the architect of none of this, but it's why he went to Riyadh in 1995; it's why he's called to Moscow every couple of months and put up in hotels; it's why he found himself in Ankara flogging helicopters for ten days last February. He goes, frankly, as a bauble, a banquet boy in the rolling Russian hospitality suite, to lend the peddling of planes and tanks some historical gravitas. He helps get the checks written. Given his delicacy, his hearing handicap, his aversion to money, and his monumental Siberian reticence, it is a special torture custom-made for him in a special capitalist hell.

"They make me go," Kalashnikov says sourly.

The town of Izhevsk and its mayor have hectored him into an equally petty arrangement, asking him to lend his name and his substantial gun collection to the "museum" of firearms being built in the center of town. The new Kalashnikov Family Museum is a boondoggle feebly masquerading as a marketing device. Izhevsk has a firearms museum already. In the basement of the new museum, however, will be a seventy-five-meter-long testing range for automatic weapons. According to the mayor, "a room for signing contracts" will be on the first floor, should anyone arrive at the dead factory with an order for guns.



signer of the Galil assault rifle, which is a copy of the AK. "He did not even have the consideration to extend his thanks!" Kalashnikov says.

The most demanding role Kalashnikov currently plays is that of mascot. The swift and unforgiving exigencies of "new" Russian life, Kalashnikov's lack of money, and his endless desire to serve the potsherds of the State have led him to join the arms-dealing road show of Rosvoorouzhenie, the defense agency in charge of selling Russian weaponry overseas. These days, the agency has a particularly urgent agenda, namely, obtaining cash, which it does by selling submarines and jets, not AKs. Its participation in the 1997 arms-fair calendar reveals the immense hunger for hard currency: Ankara in February; Abu Dhabi in March; New Delhi and Bangkok simultaneously in April; Singapore in May;

In deep winter, when moose season is over and the bear hibernate, the men of Izhevsk go hunting for snow hare, the big white rabbits native to the Ural forests. Yuri Koloskov. our hunt master, who will be taking us on a hare hunt, has explained it this way: We walk with the dogs through the woods until we flush a hare from its den. It runs wide. We trace the tracks back to the den and wait for the hare.

Today, we are visiting Kalashnikov again on Soviet Street. He's padding around in a heavy cardigan with no neck brace, a good sign for the hunt, but he has a strange bit of plastic wrapped around the heel of his bad hand, and that, in turn, is carried inside a ratty gray mitten. There is a dark poultice inside the plastic.

"Ūdmurtiyan mud," ĥe says. "An old woman I know has

given me some special earth. It should help."

We sit at the little writing table next to the tiger-maple upright piano, and Kalashnikov slides a letter across to me. It is from Eugene Stoner, the designer of the M16, thanking Kalashnikov for a gift of Kalashnikov vodka. I am impressed: Here at the turn of the millennium, the twentieth-century gods of gun design are giving each other bottles of liquor. Basically, in an effort to exist, Kalashnikov has been driving little deals, few of which ever pan out. The distillery making Kalashnikov vodka has fallen on hard times.

Kalashnikov is at heart a silent man. Like much about him, it's a grand thing, as if he's impatient with the limits of words. He does not hold forth to his family or to his court of old men; he listens, patriarchally, then delivers short, pithy edicts that are then followed.

It is within his power to get us into the factory, but, in his ironclad way, he does not want us to go. This is not because there are old East-bloc secrets to keep but because the factory-Kalashnikov's factory, the place in which he has spent most of his working life—is a corpse. He does not want us to see the thing dead.

There are other things Kalashnikov does not want us to see. His father, the vigorous Timofei Aleksandrovich, appears in the early stories of Kalashnikov's boyhood, then abruptly disappears in the thirties. In the arc of any Russian narrative, it is not a good thing when the leading male drops out dur-

> ing Stalin's purges and forced migrations.

In fact, the whole family, including Kalashnikov, then about twelve, was exiled with him to central Siberia. Timofei died there. Colonel Shkliaiev, Kalashnikov's secretary, describes it with breezy Russian bluntness as "a normal death, from hard labor."

Kalashnikov often saw Stalin, the man responsible for this-in the early fifties, sitting at the head of the Supreme Soviet. Kalashnikov had by then been made a deputy. They never spoke.

"Siberia," he says when I ask about his parents, "is a dark forest.'

His father's removal is critical to a picture of Kalashnikov. It's a small emblem of Russia's grinding mandala of self-destruction, but it fed the single-minded ferocity with which Kalashnikov entered the business of the State; it's why he made things that the State could not ignore; it's what he did when he forced the world to acknowledge his father by signing every one of his gun sketches simply "MikTim," an acronym of his name and his father's. When Kalashnikov is fond of someone, he asks that person to address him in this fashion, MikTim. It's Kalashnikov intimacy: You may address me, but you must address my father also. You must call his name.

"Did your father shoot or hunt?"

"My father was a peasant," he says, avoiding the subject.

"He was very good at technical stuff, equipment. I remember him getting the grain out of the wheat by a horse pulling a millstone. That is my first memory of technical equipment."

I turn the tape recorder on, and he flinches.

"Do we really need this?" he asks quickly. "This is all well-known. There's nothing really new here.'

But we leave it on.

If inventions are like children, I ask him, what has this

child brought you?

"What I got back?" he asks, surprised at the intimacy of the simile. "First of all, the design is world-famous. Bad children would not have been adopted by other countries. The armies know what to choose. They need reliability and simplicity. An album of my designs is coming out soon, and you will see in it that it's impossible to create such a wide spectrum of guns without love for these weapons."

In his drunk, pre-quintuple-bypass period, Boris Yeltsin came to Kalashnikov's seventy-fifth-birthday celebration in Izhevsk in 1994. He made a wild promise from the podium that the Russian government would try to patent his design so that Kalashnikov could get money from it. Naturally, nothing is happening. I ask Kalashnikov what has come of it.

"International rules exist for this, and neither the president nor anybody else can violate them," he laughs with just a slight flash of bitterness. Everything he ever designed was violated, everywhere. He wants to make sure I get it.

"Get it?" he says.

Kalashnikov started out hunting waterfowl in late adolescence. He moved from that to rifle hunting for moose and bear. He knows we will be going into the woods for hare in two days. I have thought all along that the hare hunt was arranged to get us out of town, but now Kalashnikov, perversely, appears to want to go.

"We can postpone the hunt, Mikhail Timofeievich," I say slowly, "if you would do us the honor of coming with us."

Kalashnikov kneads his bad hand. Hunting for hare is a tough thing; we will walk for miles through knee-deep snow.

"I will be there in spirit," he says formally.

Then I know what Kalashnikov knows himself. He knows that he is getting old.

It's a simple fact but a stunning one-that Kalashnikov made no money. There is little left for him but to attempt the management of his legend, which he does in fits and starts. He has not got the equipment to ask or to answer the simple, hard questions for himself, such as why the State, to which he devoted his life, has gone away. He tries in his soldierly fashion, in the circle of old men, not to dishonor what has gone before.

A few months back, somebody took Kalashnikov on a drive out east of Izhevsk to look at some new houses. They are expensive brick monstrosities-faux Victorian, faux Georgian, faux Tudor-in a jumble on a hill. Around Moscow are several "American" suburbs like this. Outside the broken hulk of Izhevsk, it looks as if a few cash-choked mob hogs have seen too much bad American TV. The deputy manager of the Kalashnikov factory has built a house here. The owner of the largest house, a turreted, fifteen-thousand-squarefoot faux Victorian, is the owner of the construction company currently building the Kalashnikov Family Museum.

When he got home, Kalashnikov had one thing to say about the people building the houses.

"They should," he said, "be taken out and shot." 12

ESQUIRE FASHION

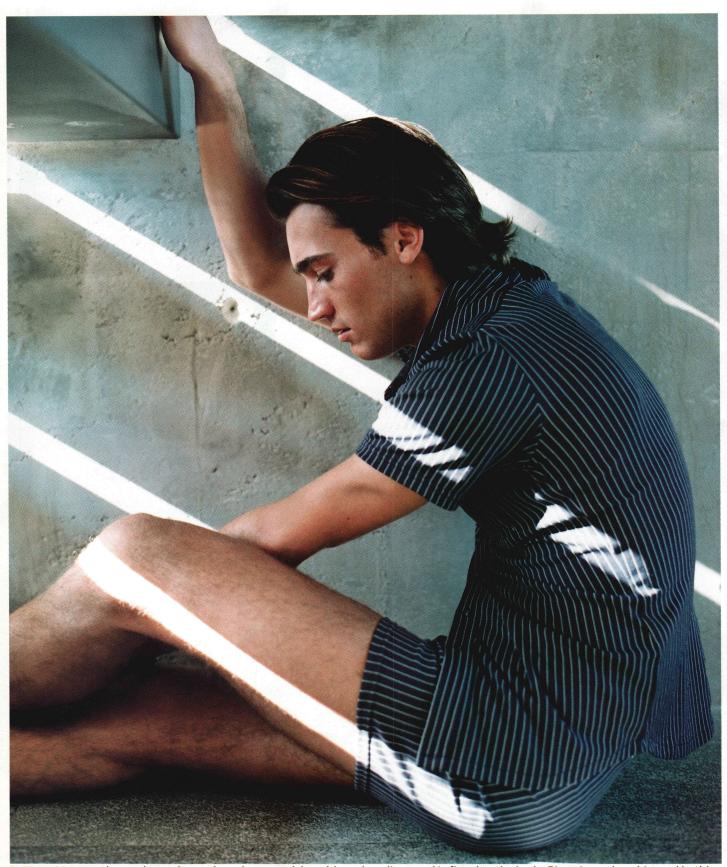
made inthe shade

SUMMER CALLS FOR MORE THAN JUST T-SHIRTS AND CUT-OFFS. THESE WARM-WEATHER ESSENTIALS OFFER A SOPHISTICATED STRATEGY—PARING DOWN FOR MAXIMUM COMFORT WHILE ACCENTUATING STYLE.









SLEEK, NOT BOXY, the modern take on the cabana set (above) has clean lines and is fitted to the body. Pinstripe nylon shirt and bathing trunks by Richard Edwards. **TRANSPARENT:** Tom Ford of Gucci's reworking of the traditional Havana-style guayabera shirt (opposite) is a cool way to generate a little heat. Embroidered cotton shirt and cotton trousers by Gucci. *For store information see page 128.*





They're back,

but they're better.

Designer-jean collections

today are less

glitzy,

more honest, and

based on the idea of

what a pair of jeans should be:

durable, utilitarian, basic.

ean designer

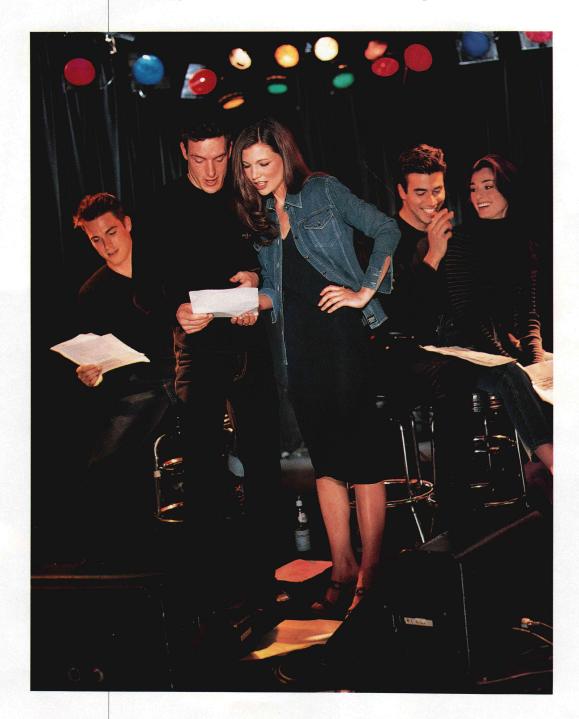
the Sequel

ABOVE: Ribbed cotton turtleneck and denim jeans by Polo Jeans Co. Her top by DKNY; jeans by Versace Jeans Couture; earrings by Tom Binns at Apropo. OPPOSITE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Cotton-blend shirt by Prada; denim jeans by Moschino Jeans Uomo. Button-front cotton-blend shirt by A|X Armani Exchange. Her top by DKNY. Zipfront polyester elastic shirt by Gianfranco Ferre Jeans; denim jeans by Tommy Jeans. this group of aspiring L. A. actors,

very



Designer-denim collections encompass a lot more than jeans.



ABOVE, LEFT TO RIGHT: Ribbed cotton V-neck by Banana Republic; denim jeans by DKNY. V-neck cotton-blend pullover by Joop Jeans; denim jeans by Valentino Jeans. Her dress by DKNY; shirt by Versace Jeans Couture; shoes by Stephane Kélian. Long-sleeved cotton crewneck and denim jeans by CK Calvin Klein Jeans. Her turtleneck by Polo Jeans Co.; jeans by Versace Jeans Couture. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: Zippered cotton jacket by Guess; cotton T-shirt by Gianfranco Ferre Jeans. Her jacket and top by DKNY; jeans by Jeans Dolce & Gabbana. Cotton cable vest by Chaps Ralph Lauren; cotton shirt by Valentino Jeans. Zippered nylon-cotton jacket by Wilke-Rodriguez; cotton-blend polo shirt by Valentino Jeans; denim jeans by DKNY. Her jacket by Jeans Dolce & Gabbana; shirt and jeans by DKNY. Modeled by actors (opposite, clockwise from top left) Chad Cook, Dara Tomanovich, Phillip Rhys, Myc Agnew, and Audie England.



This is designer fashion in a more down-to-earth mode.



ABOVE: V-neck nylon polo shirt by Banana Republic; denim jeans by Versace Jeans Couture. Her top by DKNY; jeans by Iceberg Jeans. OPPOSITE, CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Cotton polo shirt by Iceberg Jeans; denim jeans by Lucky Brand Jeans. Ribbed cotton-blend polo shirt by Jeans Dolce & Gabbana; denim jeans by CK Calvin Klein Jeans. Her shirt by Iceberg Jeans; jeans by Valentino Jeans; shoes by Stephane Kélian. Ribbed cotton polo shirt and denim jeans by A|X Armani Exchange; leather boots by Polo by Ralph Lauren. Her shirt by Jeans Dolce & Gabbana; pants by Polo Jeans Co. For store information see page 128.





The classic piqué polo shirt and. far left, its originator, French tennis star René Lacoste.

GENTLEMAN

ESSONS

AN ICON OF MASCULINE STYLE, THE **POLO SHIRT** HAS BEEN REVISED. REWORKED. AND MADE CHIC-OVER AND OVER AGAIN By Woody Hochswender

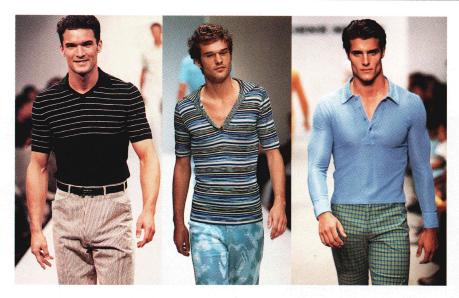
VERY FEW OF US canter about verdant meadows trying to strike a wooden ball with a mallet. But nearly everyone has a polo shirt-or five or ten. Of all the sports that have influenced men's wear, the one played by the fewest people seems to have had the greatest impact. The polo shirt, ubiquitous on the golf links, on the beach, and everywhere else, has become the focus of a fashion revival, particularly among avant-garde designers. Close-fitting versions are practically mandatory at hip designer shows in Paris, Milan, and New York.

The original classic polo, a shortsleeved white pullover made of knitted wool, featured a turndown (rolled) collar, which suited polo players because it didn't flap around. Esquire's Encyclopedia of 20th Century Men's Fashions calls the polo shirt "the first bona fide sports shirt."

Combining function and status, it turned up early in this century among men who played the aristocratic game on enormous greenswards in places that have long since been turned into parkways and suburban housing tracts (largely filled in summer by humans wearing polo shirts). The tan camelhair polo coat also derives from the polo fields, where players wore them over their shoulders between chukkers.

The most famous polo shirt was actually designed by a tennis star, the Frenchman René Lacoste, known as Le Crocodile for his ruthless style of play. $\fint 2$ It had a shirttail slightly longer in back $\fint 5$ so that it would not pull out when worn during a match. Lacoste scandalized the tradition-bound tennis world of the twenties when he first appeared on court in the shirt. The prevailing =

dress code called for long-sleeved woven shirts, and Lacoste's was both knitted and short-sleeved, allowing for greater freedom of movement. In a burst of self-referential hubris, he began affixing his trademark embroidered crocodile emblem to his shirts in 1933, creating perhaps the first logo worn on the outside of a garment and a scourge that is with us to this day. (Lacoste has also been credited with inventing the ball machine, the steel racket, and a damper used on rackets to prevent vibrations to the elbow. He died last December at ninety-two.) The company he founded, La Chemise Lacoste of Paris, makes polo shirts in a minimum of forty colors each season. It



The polo shirt has become a focal point for designers. Close-fitting versions are practically mandatory in any hip men's designer show in Paris, Milan, or New York.

sells eight million or so a year.

The Lacoste polo comes in many fabric styles, including the classic waffleknit piqué, the petite piqué, and mercerized lisle cotton. So-called interlock-knit polos tend to have a silky feel, like the smooth cotton shirts made under the

Bobby Jones label, which are very much in demand by golfers. The classic English polo by John Smedley is perhaps the most luxurious example you can find in cotton. The most expensive polos are made by Loro Piana, the great Italian fabric house, which sells an exceptionally plush three-ply cashmere polo for \$575. Its silk-and-cashmere polo checks out at a more affordable, if not reasonable, \$495.

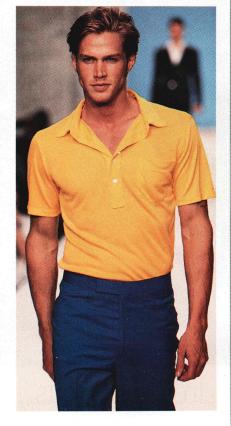
The newer designer versions tend to be liberally laced with Lycra spandex, enabling a close, sexy fit. The most daring designers seem to fancy them now, and they are intended as much for the nightclub as for the athletic field. John Bartlett designs his polos tight and sculptural around the chest. Gene Meyer goes for vivid, iridescent colors. Gianni Versace does op-artpatterned polos as well as transparent ones. Many designers and manufacturers produce them with zippered necks or with open-collared, buttonless Vnecks sometimes called "johnny collars." Missoni makes these in its trademark zigzag patterns. Hermès has them in vintage stripes.

These are classic sport shirts, but their provenance is the sixties and seventies. They connote the opposite of the squeaky-clean athletic polo: Lean, sensual, and slightly synthetic, they are reptilian in ways Le Crocodile never anticipated. 19

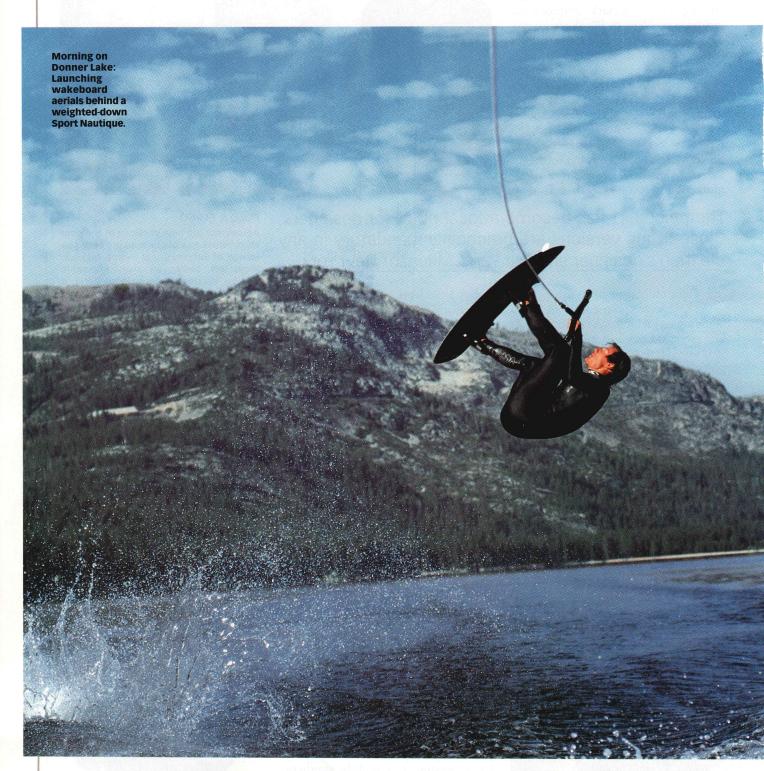


Among the hip new versions of the polo shirt, which has become a kind of lingua franca of international men's fashion: From left, above, an elegant graphic striped version by Hermès of Paris; a fitted V-neck patterned knit shown by Missoni in Milan; a chest- and bicepclinging shirt by Gene Meyer in New York. Below left, a casual-Friday staple, the polo shirt worn with a suit, shown by the English designer Nicole Farhi. Below, a bright-marigold polo shirt by the American designer Tommy Hilfiger.





the male animal FROM THE HEALTH CLUB TO THE HIGH LIFE—TWENTY PAGES IN THE LIFE OF THE MODERN MAN



In one curious, midair moment of clarity, I execute a full

Across a Tryout Lake Sidevays

Many a former two-planker has retired his skis in favor of the board

Wet.

At sun's first light, that's not such an appealing prospect, even if you're swathed in a wet suit and neon life vest like a seal in a flak jacket, beholding the still, glassy perfection of California's Donner Lake

A perfection decisively shattered by DoubleUP's brand-new Sport Nautique as it cleaves lustily through the water, ruining all adjacent fishing thanks to the presence on board of "fat chicks"-the politically incorrect term for the cement-filled paint buckets that weigh down the boat's bow to create a bigger wake. The wake's the thing in wakeboarding: an endless wave, from which riders launch their aerial antics.

Greg Nelson is a pro rider and co-owner of DoubleUP, the wakeboard maker that took its name from the technique of doubling a boat back across its own wake to create a superboosting launch ramp double the size of an ordinary furrow. This lake in the High Sierra is DoubleUP's proving ground.

Wakeboards first appeared around 1985, and as a sideways take on waterskiing, the sport has undergone an evolution that parallels

that of snowboarding. Kids bug their parents into trying wakeboarding, and many discover that it's easier than waterskiing. You don't need glassy conditions (although they're best), and it's cheap (around \$300 to start—plus use of a really expensive boat).

Submerged knees knocking together knobbily, feet snug in water-ski bindings, I meekly wag the rope handle for Nelson to "hit it." Having blown my first two turns—dragged under the surface. scooping water up my nostrils-I was beginning to choke. Wakeboarding, it seems, is a snap to all but bobbing flotsam like me.

This time, however, I get the knack of the Ten Foot Pole (as in "couldn't drag my ass out of the water with a . . . ") rope rig. It pops me up on my feet and keeps me there while I accustom myself to sliding behind a boat. Sideways. It makes the going painlessly easy-suck the board up to your body, pivot your front foot forward while the nose breaks the surface, and you're up and fixating on the wake, thinking, Can I really launch into the air without tearing my arm from its socket?

Once you're riding, the side-

ways physics of snowboarding apply (bend your knees, keep a low center of gravity, turn by applying toe or heel pressure to the outside edge), and hooking turns feels like running through deepest powder.

The sun makes its way out, the lake is a crystalline green, and I knife across it like a skipping stone. With vaguely five minutes under my belt, I try to surf the lip of the wake, dip an edge under, and, in one curious, midair

moment, execute a full dual-release catapult off the board and onto my forehead. Anyone who thinks water doesn't hurt can borrow my Nembutal.

Wakeboarding camps have popped up all over. This summer, DoubleUP will run daylong clinics in Stockton, California. Call 209-478-4706.

I get back up, and now I'm bold—cutting up the wake, "sprocking" up on top.

"All right," I cry. "I'm ready." They look at me quizzically. "I say send me. I'm ready to double up."

Nelson looks out at the lake, suddenly turned to chop, and screws up his mouth, considering.

"You hafta kinda know how to hit 'em. . . . " I suppose aloud.

"The first time, you don't hit the double-up," he advises sagely. "The double-up hits you."

Ow. Perhaps that wind has kicked up a little too much fuss.

-BILLY MILLER

dual-release catapult off the board and onto my forehead.

Pick a Shoe and Run with It

Only one out of four runners has a normal gait. The rest of us have ankles that wobble either in or out with every step. Add this biomechanical flaw to a pounding force equal to two to four times your body weight, then multiply it by the four thousand strides in an average three-mile jaunt. For anyone who hasn't divined the exact right choice of space-age shoe, this equation eventually spits out an injury.

"The problem," says Mark Reeves, a podiatrist at Virginia Mason Medical Center, "may well be that we underuse our feet so much that they aren't ready when we actually ask them to do some work." The next thing you know, your bones and tendons are taking the blows that would otherwise have been softened by the foot's natural shock-absorbing mechanism. The good news is that,

thanks to the geeks with Ph.D.'s in biomechanics, up to half of all running injuries can be avoided if you

WHEN TO SHOP

 Feet can expand by as much as a size and a half during the course of the day-buy shoes in the afternoon.



WHEN THEY LOSE IT

- Black carbonizedrubber soles last longest.
- · After a year, the rubber in running shoes hardens even if they've been sitting in a closetget a new pair.
- Running shoes lose 30 percent of their shock absorption after three hundred milesnever use a pair for more than seven hundred miles.

in varying widths and can be particularly good for wide feet. Supinators need a shoe with plenty of cushioning, something

shoe? First of all.

shoe suits every

not every brand of

type of foot. Nikes,

for example, tend

to be narrow: New

Balance shoes come

available in all the major brands. But if you overpronate, shopping is trickier. You need stability, or "motion control." According to the foot docs, overpronators should look for a strong heel counter—the stiff back of the shoe that holds the heel perpendicular to the ground-and a rigid midsole, which are best for holding the foot in place and controlling its motion.

And what if you're one of those oddballs who have normal feet? Find the cushiest shoe you can and enjoy the ride.

-Colin Beavan

choose an appropriately designed shoe.

After the outside of your heel strikes the ground, your foot rolls forward into its weight-bearing position. At the same time, your heel rocks inward and your arch elongates, safely absorbing much of the shock of your stride. In the well-adapted, this fancy footwork stops when the back of the heel is straight up and down.

The sad news is that for half of us, the rocking motion goes past this midpoint—we "overpronate." The forty muscles and tendons of the foot strain to hold it steady. Another 25 percent of us—the "supinators"—have heels that roll in too little, absorbing less shock, and the joints take a hit with every step. Overpronation, together with overtraining, causes the bulk of running injuries.

If most of us have these problems, how do we find the right

THE RIGHT SHOE FOR THE WRONG FOOT WHAT YOU **YOU NEED** YOUR SHOE Supinate or have Light and **Nike Air Max** normal feet. cushioned. Mild motion Overpronate. **New Balance 851** weigh less than control Nike Air Structure 140 pounds, run (stability). Triax no more than Saucony 3D Grid twenty miles a Hurricane week, and rarely have foot pain. Overpronate and Good motion Saucony Grid Stabil have foot pain. control. New Balance 999 **Brooks Addiction** Etonic Pro III ASICS Gel-MC 125 Badly overpronate. Excellent **New Balance 585** control. have flat feet, or Nike Air Equilibrium weigh more than ASICS Gel-MC Plus 175 pounds. **Brooks Beast** Adidas Lexicon Extra

At the Gym

The **Sweat** Headache

BANGING HEADS in a rugby scrum is sure to leave you with a sore skull-but jogging? According to a report in The Physician and Sportsmedicine, headaches induced by aerobic exercise or weight training are nearly three times more common than those caused by a bonk on the bean.

Don't blame the piped-in disco at your gym. Aerobic exertion seems to provoke headaches by overheating your body, which causes blood vessels around your cranium to expand—the same mechanism that's believed to cause migraines. In fact, says Mayo Clinic neurologist J. Keith Campbell, many "closet migrainers" have their first run-in with the nastiest of headaches after a vigorous workout. (Half-dressed men sometimes turn up in emergency rooms with a related syndrome known as "orgasmic cephalalgia" . . . but that's another story.)

Weight lifters risk "exertion" headaches. When you hoist a heavy object, your muscles tense and your airway closes. At the same time, your chest is trying to force air out, creating a brief spike of pressure in both the chest and the head-which can irritate cranial blood vessels.

Drugs can prevent the headaches, but potential side effects make them a gamble. Try using less weight or running a shorter distance, then gradually building up. Also, staying out of the sun while exercising and skipping the post-workout beer (alcohol further swells blood vessels) will help the cephalalgic jock avoid brain pain.

-TIMOTHY GOWER

Side Effects

When Mr. Happy Won't Listen

A SOUIRMY HYPOTHETICAL: Suppose you had to choose between being happy and having sex? It's a reality for people who rely on Prozac or its chemical cousins to treat depression. The true dimensions of the problem are only now emerging, says Dr. Richard A. Friedman, director of Cornell Medical Center's psychopharmacology clinic. New studies show that when despair is sent packing, the libido goes along for the ride as much as half the time.

The sexual havoc wreaked by this class of antidepressants, called selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRI's), includes weak erections, difficulty achieving orgasm, and loss of desire. SSRI's work by preventing brain-cell receptors from reabsorbing serotonin, a neural messenger that regulates mood. The problem may be that they knock out reabsorption not only by receptors that affect depression but also by those that control sex drive. As if that weren't enough, SSRI's probably knock out signals from further down the neurological line, reducing the sensitivity of the penis (according to one patient, to that of a fingertip).

But there are strategies that can help when the spirits are rising but the flesh isn't. Individuals react to SSRI's differently, so guys who have problems with Prozac may have better luck with Paxil, say. A new antidepressant, Serzone, is said to spare the sex drive more often. Many patients who use it are firm believers—or just firm.

Another approach involves a "drug holiday," in which a patient lays off his drug from Thursday to Sunday so he can have a good weekend romp. And some physicians have had success in temporarily counteracting the sexual effects of SSRI's with prescription antihistamines or psychostimulants.

Clearly, no one should experiment with these strategies except under a physician's supervision. "Balance is critical," says Friedman. Get it wrong and you could end up back where you couldn't get started.

-COLIN BEAVAN

Self-Medication

The Low-Pressure

AMERICAN MEDICAL science has just weighed in with the latest word on the relationship between diet and disease, but you heard it from your mother first. Drink your (low-fat) milk and eat your

fruits and vegetables. In the DASH (Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension) study published in April in The New England Journal of Medicine, researchers found that people with mildly elevated blood pressure significantly reduced it within two weeks of starting an otherwise unremarkable diet packed with fruits and vegetables—in total, eight to ten servings a day. A group that added a heavy dose of low-fat dairy foods to this regimen saw roughly twice as much improvement. On this combo diet, the subjects dropped an average of 11.4 points in systolic blood pressure (the high number) and 5.5 in diastolic pressure (the low number). That's as large a drop as you'd expect from standard antihypertension drugs. Strange as it sounds, good food could be our next therapeutic drug of choice and not a moment too soon.

Hypertension afflicts around fifty million Americans—one in four adults-and contributes mightily to heart attack and stroke. Typically, blood pressure rises with age, so if you fall in the 130/85 range as a younger man, trouble likely awaits.

Conventional drug therapy-most commonly diuretics and beta-blockers—is effective, but it can exact a nasty price. Diuretics marry you to the bathroom and deal you about one chance in three of impotence; betablockers bring on lethargy, drowsiness, and even more withering odds of impotence.

Still, before the DASH study, the idea that diet could replace hypertension drugs (or, in more severe cases, permit reduced dosages) would have been regarded by mainstream medicine as loose talk around the health-food counter.

Researchers knew about salt, of course. The link between reducing dietary sodium and lowering blood pressure has been pretty well established (despite a recent contrarian study in The Journal of the American Medical Association). But a shelf full of medical literature had failed to find any dramatic improvement in blood pressure when subjects were dosed with supplemental potassium, magnesium, or

Before the study, the idea that diet could replace



calcium. Only when the hypertension researchers gave up on their reductionist bad selves and stopped trying to isolate a biochemical mechanism for reducing blood pressure did the results roll in. Like moms for millennia before them, they just fed people what they suspected was healthy. "We ≤ used foods in which these minerals travel together, says Eva Come zanek, the NIH nutritionist who oversaw the DASH study. "So we

sacrificed the mechanism for something that people can use."

Conveniently, the same lowfat, high-fruit-and-vegetable diet that battles high blood pressure has been shown to be our best line of nutritional defense against cancer and heart disease. One diet fits all. But DASH has raised interesting questions as well. When they designed the study, the researchers were banking on fruits and vegetables' having some kind of positive WHAT'S ON THE MENU

effect; that low-fat dairy products also proved so beneficial amazed them. Is it the potassium or the calcium in dairy or the fact that, overall, the combo diet increases the percentage of protein (thought by some to ease blood pressure) at the expense of fat (nobody's good-health choice)? Don't ask, iust eat.

unlike the DASH subjects, we don't have a research kitchen preparing our meals. Because doctors can't control our willpower, most cardiologists still reach for the scrip when treating mild to moderate hypertensives. "I'm good at getting people to take drugs," says Dr. Michael Alderman, president of the American Society of Hypertension.

"I'm not so good at getting them to change their behavior." Not an attitude that would inspire many to mend their dietary ways, but typical of the breed.

"Cardiologists don't know from preventing hypertension," says Dr. Jerome D. Cohen, director of the Preventive Cardiology Programs at St. Louis University Health Sciences Center. "They're pushing stress tests and catheters."

Could it be that the best course of action is simply to save ourselves? -Joseph Hooper

Of course,

The DASH diet is not a regimen that only a fanatic could follow. No brown rice and seaweed or tofu with all the trimmings. Here is what a day in the low-pressure life might look like: You get from 2,100 to 3,100 calories, depending on your weight and level of physical activity; you're allowed three cups of java; and, in case you feared the worst, you can even have two stiff ones.

BREAKFAST

Unsweetened orange juice Fat-free fruit yogurt Granola bar Milk (1% fat)

LUNCH

Turkey sandwich on whole-wheat bread with lettuce and mayonnaise Fruit cocktail in light syrup Orange

DINNER

Spicy seafood Scallion rice Spinach Dinner roll with margarine Melon balls Milk (1% fat)

SNACKS

Peanuts **Dried apricots** Fruit punch

For more information, contact the National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute at 301-496-4236.

hypertension drugs was regarded as loose talk around the health-food counter.

The Male Mind

The Instructive By Michael Segell

Are you man enough

to be, uh, generative?

LAST WINTER, AFTER a twenty-year absence, I returned to the scene of my youthful glory—the hockey rink—and discovered the deeply satisfying rewards of coaching. There's nothing quite so gratifying as showing a ten-yearold kid how to fake wide, put the puck between the defender's legs, and jet by him during a Saturday practice, then watching the boy execute the deke brilliantly in a game on Sunday—even if it is just past sunup. It's enough to make a man think of chucking the office treadmill for a gig as youth director at Sky Rink or the Y.

According to Erik Erikson, I'm experiencing a typical surge of manly "generativity." The psychologist theorized that at a certain age-anywhere between thirty-five and fifty-five-men begin to show concern for (as opposed to indifference to) the generation nipping at their heels,

particularly for young adults and for children other than their own. Generativity is a foundation of Erikson's model of human development-central to achieving a sense of fulfillment. It plays out in three stages: the biological (having a child), the parental (raising him), and the societal (acting as caretaker of the larger culture). As a father of five, I figured I might be granted an exemption from being called to help mold other people's kids. But here I am, on the rink at dawn, with fifteen prepubescent Gretzky wannabes, trying to help them extend their season into the playoffs.

Playing mentor is not unique to humans. Among chimpanzees, wizened tuskers bond with youthful males during crucial phases of development. They share food with their protégés and instruct them in the nuances of chimp politics. And psychiatrist Tom Insel, director of Yerkes Primate Research Center, reports that senior baboons display superhuman patience in conveying to their callow troopmates the difference between the alarm call that signals the presence of a nearby hawk and the one that says, "Snake!" "They've got to be damned sure, for both their sakes, that the younger guys don't mix them up."

Just as the occasional renegade chimp is banished because he's not a team player, not all men become generative. Most of us have been exposed at some point to megalomaniacal superiors who jealously guard their skills and refuse to take on protégés or name successors. According to psychoanalyst John Munder Ross, author of The Sadomasochism of Everyday Life, such men are angry, envious, selfish, and narcissistic. "They don't have much libido or feeling to invest in others, including the next generation," he says. "When they do mentor, they want men to submit to them as if they were clones."

Although Erikson theorized that having a child is a precursor to achieving generativity, a study of childless men indicates that it's not. Psychologist John Snarey, author of How Fathers Care for the Next Generation, found that about three quarters of childless men who substituted, for

parenting, an interest in other people's kids were likely by their late forties to be working with young people outside their own family. Only about a quarter of those who substituted a nonhuman object-a pet, car, fixer-upper home-were generative by midlife. And none of the childless men who focused on themselves-on, say, bodybuilding, personal health, or macho sexuality-demonstrated a later interest in shepherding young people.

Snarey's work, based on a study of three hundred married Boston men who've been exhaustively interviewed over forty years,

also found a direct correlation between generativity and marital happiness. More than three quarters of the childless men who worked with the children of others remained happily married, while more than half of those who substituted nonhuman objects or themselves ended

The best news of all: Snarey's findings indicate that men who are involved in generative social activities tend to enjoy better job promotions. Being on the father track-and, later, on the mentor track-is not incompati-

If only I could do something about the hours.

up unhappily married or divorced. ble with professional success.

You can reach Michael Segell by e-mail at msegell@hearst.com.





COTY US INC.

The Force that Pulls You Closer.

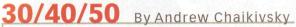
Are You a Marked Man?

THAT SCALY LITTLE PATCH of skin by your temple turned out to have the dire appellation of basal-cell carcinoma. It's gone; you're cured. Whew! You got to bond with your doctor and have a genuine Life Experience. End of story.

Probably—but a study of thirty-seven thousand basal-cell patients by researchers at the Danish Epidemiology Science Centre suggests that the malady may be a marker for other, vastly more serious cancers. The subjects were almost 13 percent more likely to turn up with melanoma, non-Hodgkin's lym-

phoma, or breast, lung, or other devastating cancers.

Those are not shattering odds, but you should insist on being regularly examined in light of your basal-cell brush with fate. And remember that while some of the 750,000 U.S. cases a year have a genetic basis, most are due to exposure to UV radiation. Yet another good reason to put some SPF 15 between -BEN DICKINSON you and the sun.



Getting Older Will Leave a Bad Taste in Your Mouth

GUMS

Your thirty-two teeth are hugged tightly by your gums—soft tissue that regenerates every one to two weeks. In your thirties, you'll notice your bright smile beginning to fade: Nerves running through the center of each tooth are shrinking, causing your teeth to become denser and, in turn, darker.

Your gums, under constant bacterial assault, are beginning to shrink and recede from your teeth. If the gap between tooth and gum is more than a mere three millimeters, you have gum disease. You're not alone: By forty, four out of five men have seriously diseased gums.

You may be feeling long in the tooth, but it's not your teeth that are growing: Your shrinking gums expose your teeth's roots and, in turn, cementum-softer connective tissue that can be ravaged more quickly by plaque than the enamel above it. By sixty, more than half of us will suffer from root cavities.

TASTE BUDS

Never again will your mouth have it so good: Ten thousand taste buds, on average, coat not just your tongue but also the roof of your mouth, your pharynx, and your esophagus. They're replaced every ten days, during which time they're bathed in fifteen quarts of saliva. Women, of course. have better taste than men. They tend to have more taste buds, and, scientists believe, estrogen increases a woman's taste sensitivity.

Your taste buds can pick out only basic tastes: salty, sweet, sour, and bitter. But as you chew, you create enough pressure for food to release odor molecules, which enter your sinuses from the back of your throat. There, in a spot no bigger than a postage stamp, six million nerve cells discern up to ten thousand different food scents. When you're in your forties, these receptors begin to deteriorate, eventually affecting your sense of taste. By your mid-fifties, you may notice a drop in your ability to taste. You're no longer replacing your taste buds efficiently, and by sixty you'll be tasting only half of what you did in your twenties. Your appetite may now be especially partial to junk food-ice cream, cookies, and potato chips. Why? Salty and sweet are the first tastes to go, and you may find yourself overcompensating to maintain the same taste kick.

BAD BREATH

More than three hundred different forms of bacteria are growing in your mouth—a perfect breeding ground set at 95 degrees and 100 percent humidity. Anaerobic bacteria dwelling on the back of the tongue and in the throat are especially prone to releasing the same sulfurous gases found in paper mills, which means that one in four of us will have a nasty case of bad breath at some point in the day.

As your gums recede, bacteria find new breeding grounds in the pockets between your teeth and gum line. Also, as you sleep, saliva production slows down and turns slightly less acidic. Bacteria enjoy hours of uninterrupted sulfur production, which is why you have morning breath. The good news: It will go away when your salivary glands kick back in, which they will do when you begin eating, drinking, or simply talking—if you can wait it out.

Some studies show that when you reach your late fifties, your salivary glands will be pumping out less saliva, and you may find your breath staler. If you think gargling with mouthwash is the solution, think again. Though they can disguise your breath for about twenty minutes, many mouthwashes contain alcohol, which will dry your mouth out even more. With less oxygen-rich saliva, bacteria will churn out more sulfurous gases, and your bad breath could return worse than ever.

If You're Taking Aspirin For Your Heart, What Should You Take For Your Aches And Pains?

You may have heard about the use of aspirin to help prevent second heart attacks. You might even know somebody whose doctor has prescribed this aspirin heart therapy. Clearly, for those patients with a high risk of second heart attacks, this is important news.

See Your Doctor First

A responsible heart healthcare program starts with a careful study of your needs by a qualified medical professional. Your doctor will probably consider diet, exercise

and lifestyle as part of a total heart healthcare regimen, and aspirin heart therapy might be considered. Only your doctor can tell you how, when and if you should use this aspirin therapy.

The Importance of Following Your Doctor's Recommended Dosage

Always follow your doctor's recommended dosage for aspirin therapy exactly...don't take less

aspirin, don't take more. In fact, taking too much aspirin, especially over a long period of time, may put you at a greater risk of stomach side effects (irritation, an ulcer) and those side effects could affect your ability to continue the regimen your doctor has prescribed. Sometimes these side effects can occur without obvious symptoms so that you may not even be aware of the problem.

Treating Your Aches and Pains with Tylenol

So, what *should* you take for everyday aches and pains if you're already taking aspirin for your heart today? Doctors are recommending Tylenol the most. That's

because Tylenol is a strong, effective and proven pain reliever. And Tylenol works differently than aspirin. Tylenol won't irritate your stomach the way aspirin sometimes can. Aspirin for your heart; Tylenol for your pain.

Remember, if your doctor has recommended taking aspirin to reduce the risk of a second heart attack, don't take more than

instructed. Tylenol may be a better choice for your aches and pains. Be sure to talk to your own doctor, and use only as directed.





Thank You for Not Flirting

By Doug Marlette

"SLIDE ON OVER HERE," purred the man who had invited her to lunch. "I want to show you something." She was an attractive, ambitious junior staffer in his Washington office; he was older, powerful, and close to the White House chief of staff at the time. Although conversation had been rocky, laced with nonstop sexual innuendo, nothing had prepared her for the moment when she reluctantly slid around the banquette and he whisked the white tablecloth from his lap and—voilà!—guess what was lurking there?

"I gasped and ran off," says the woman, now a White House senior adviser and no shrinking violet. "It was the worst sexual harassment I ever endured. I should've poured hot coffee in his lap or said something witty like 'It looks like a penis, only smaller.' But I was young, and

things like that scare you."

True, the unequal power arrangement—always dicey is the gist of harassment. And amidst the current edginess in the battle of the sexes, it's become harder for men to cal-

ibrate their behavior. In our litigious society, sexual politics has taken a bitter turn.

"Don't say anything in the office you wouldn't say to your own daughter-or you wouldn't want someone else to say to your daughter," says a consultant who advises top corporate executives on how to avoid the sexual-harassment land mines. "That's something most men instinctively understand.

It's one thing to say, "Nice jacket" and another to say, "Nice ta-tas."

A pat on the back is not a pat on the butt. On second thought, no touching is recommended. You can't predict the response. When composing e-mail, assume that it will be read by everyone. Remember: Even an untrue accusation can ruin lives.

But flirting is fun, we protest. Isn't corporate life dismal enough already? Is the current atmosphere turning the workplace into a gynecologist's office—to be safe from lawsuits you must have a third party present? Will a THANK YOU FOR NOT FLIRTING sign hang over the watercooler? Will we all be sent outside the building like smokers to leer at the ladies and make appreciative comments?

"It's all code anyway," says a young exec. "Smart women know what 'Nice blouse' means. For men, compliments are a civilized release of sexual aggression."

A testosterone-free office may not be a worthy goal for society

Okay, men can be pretty oblivious about boundaries—but where do you draw the line?

Older women tend to be more accepting that boys will be boys. "I would get out of ticklish situations by pretending I didn't hear it," says an elegant mid-forties editor. "One man came into my office and unmistakably propositioned me. I changed the subject—just started prattling on about my allergies, my cat—and after a while he went away."

Younger women, reared on feminism, are more readily offended. They see it as an ethical question, a political issue. But the sorry fact is that women who insist on rigidly enforced boundaries may win the battle but lose the war. In the precincts of power that men occupy, a

certain collegiality is required and is always being tested. Can you take it? An ability to roll with the punches, to take razzing with stoic grace, is the mark of a worthy competitor. If women raise the threat of litigation when the going gets tough, they may effectively exclude themselves from playing with the big boys. Instead of a glass ceiling, they'll face a fire wall.

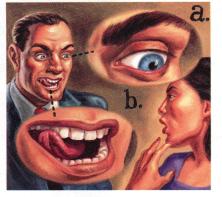
More women in hierarchies will help. Having a mentor is the time-honored means of learning and advancing. A young man can become the fair-

haired boy to a senator or CEO-do the errands, the scut work—and get to learn and grow. For young women, such opportunity is still fraught with difficulties.

So here's the deal, fellas. Forget the rationalizations. If you're in a position to affect a woman's pay or performance rating, don't flirt. If you're a peer and there's no way you have that kind of power over her, you can fol-

low your nose, so to speak.

As for the women who are determined to take no fecal matter, more power to them. But before turning in a creep, they should try to handle it themselves. Remember: Human beings have consciences; corporations don't-no matter how many sexual-harassment guidelines they adopt or handicapped parking spaces they provide. Pay increases and promotions are better for women than guidelines.



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It's just common sense:
Look at the facts and it's easy
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DR. LEWENBERG'S FORMULA
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normal hair. Plus, it's far less
expensive than surgical or nonmedical alternatives and far
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old-fashioned minoxidil alone.

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Nearly 90% of patients who apply Dr. Lewenberg's Formula show "visible—and even cosmetically significant—improvement in hair quality" after just three months with over 85% of patients starting to grow normal hair within that period.

That's the major finding of an article published in the highly respected medical journal Advances In Therapy® (Oct. '96)

improvement.

The article also reported:

❖ 91% of patients—men and women—who used the formula for 1½ to 2 years grew "beautiful, normal hair" or showed "marked hair growth"

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problems. He
was one of the
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to use minoxidil in the
fight against
baldness, but



noticed that results were most often disappointing. That's what led to his work to find a more effective treatment—and to Dr. Lewenberg's Formula.

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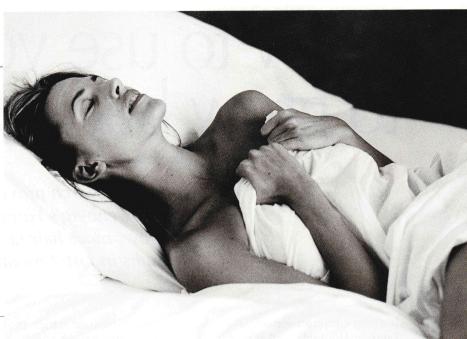
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Five Women in Search of the Tantric Orgasm



One day in the spring, a levelheaded male friend turned to me with a post-second-divorce sigh and announced he was ready to explore the more relaxed, Eastern notion of sex: something that's slow, easy, and not about completion, per se. "Sex shouldn't be about the destination but the journey."

Oh, boy.

I thought I had absorbed a fair amount about the ancient Hindu practice of tantric sex through cultural osmosis. Tantra—or

"Sex shouldn't be about the destination but about the journey," he said. Western tantra (authentic tantra prohibits intercourse and ejaculation)—is attracting more trend spotters than a Smashing Pumpkins Free Tibet concert. Weekend work-

shops (which can charge upwards of \$800) are packed. References to tantric sex have snaked into Spalding Gray's monologues. Actors Michael Tucker and Jill Eikenberry (remember *L. A. Law?*) give embarrassing quotes about their sex life. Sting hasn't been shy about discussing *his* tantric prowess. And your local superstore should already be stocked with

such titles as Sexual Energy Ecstasy, The Art of Sexual Ecstasy, Mystical Sex, and Tantra: A Handbook for Spiritual Lovers. I decided to call an expert a Toronto woman named Lucy Becker—to learn more.

Tantric sex has its own lingo, she explained: The vagina is a "yoni," the penis a "wand of light" (which may bring to mind those glow-in-the-dark sticks you played with at camp, but no matter). Kundalini denotes life force and sexual energy, and intercourse isn't about getting sweaty and banging the headboard; it's about lining up the chakras, the body's spiritual energy points.

"We are all interpenetrated by something called the energetic field, or prana," she said. "In tantra, we use that prana to propel us into a higher arc of spiritual development. We do this through breathing exercises, yoga, and visualization, and we try to keep our bodies strong, practice sex regularly, and stay away from tobacco and alcohol."

What could be better than strong, sober bodies primed for interpenetration? Lucy says that after she learned the Cobra Breath—a basic tantric exercise that involves breathing and squeezing—she had

an orgasm so blinding, so mindmeltingly intense, that it changed her life forever. Naturally, I asked her how.

"I became clairvoyant," said Lucy. "I could see the future."

Well, golly, that sure sounds better than whisker burn and sharing soggy bran muffins on Sunday morning.

Still, a sexual skeptic might be forgiven for asking, Is tantric sex just a bunch of trippy, dippy new-age hocus-pocus? I would have asked Lucy, but I was off to dinner with a group of friends.

We convened at an Italian place in TriBeCa: a thirty-year-old from a famous intellectual family, a blockbuster commercial novelist, a women's-magazine editor, and a Harvard doctoral candidate—all seasoned warriors on the grueling sexual playing fields of Manhattan. As the breadsticks arrived, I said what was on my mind: Who here wants to have tantric sex?

BLOCKBUSTER NOVELIST: Not me. It's all about withholding pleasure. I knew one guy who was into it—he was Swiss; that should tell you something—and for him it was all about delaying gratification, about his ability to control himself.

WILLIAM WALDRON

INTELLECTUAL OFFSPRING: I disagree. I think it's actually about being comfortable enough with yourself to have a massage, to have someone stroke you for an hour and admire you. The sex we have now is all in-and-out and "Let's see, I can squeeze you in next Thursday."

EDITOR: Look, every rock star and movie star is a Buddhist these days, so why not a tantric-sex-practicing Buddhist? Sure, it sounds a little contrived. On the other hand, my generation, which grew up with AIDS, knows nothing about freewheeling sexual exploration. What we got was a whole lot of latex.

A question was bugging me. Why would a man find tantric sex appealing? Wouldn't it be painful not to ejaculate for ten hours?

HARVARD: Men aren't allowed to be too macho anymore, so tantric sex allows them to be sexual in a nonthreatening, liberal-arts way.

My weary male friend sprang to mind. Is tantric sex, I asked, a slower, more . . . geriatric form of lovemaking? Does it appeal to people past the rutting stage? There's an exercise I read about in one of those tantric books. The couple lie next to each other without touching, imagining that they are linked at the chakras—the head, throat, heart, solar plexus, and genitals.

BLOCKBUSTER: That's it? Or how about an exercise that's pure meditation? It's called "raising kundalini."

EDITOR: Yo, baby, what say you and me go raise some kundalini?

The check arrived. We hadn't reached any conclusions about tantra or interpenetration, yonis or light wands. Blockbuster had to go work on her novel. After all, she pointed out, she'd been paid a million bucks for it. As she imparted this bit of knowledge, her face lit up. She looked divine, as if she'd undergone some profound mystical experience or achieved some higher peace. - ALEX KUCZYNSKI

The Office

The Sage's Game

THE OFFICE SAGE comes to work at the crack of 10:00 A.M. More often than not, he skips the Big Meetings. He's good on the big ideas, worthless on execution. Once, maybe twenty-five years ago, he was a go-getter, fresh out of a college more prestigious than the sorry school you attended. But somewhere along the way-there are rumors of some unspeakable personal tragedy—he lost all ambition, and now he wears his reluctance like a badge.

The office sage gets by partly because of his magnificent brain (it certainly isn't his work ethic) and partly because he knows exactly who's doing what to whom. He has gathered so much interoffice intelligence because all day long, shlumps like you scurry to his office with complaints about your immediate bosses-which you mention casually between long soliloquies in which you confess your innermost longings. For all his wisdom, the sage is a terrible gossip.

The office sage was Jerry Maguire long before Jerry Maguire was Jerry Maguire. Only he couldn't bring himself to quit and start a firm that would better reflect his own values. He could never do something as dramatic and hopeful as that. Through an inertia that seems to go with his underachiever's genius, he has stayed, and stayed, and stayed.

The sage is a melancholy figure out of Cheever, with a despicable habit or two. He's a holdout smoker, for one thing, the only one who still lights up at his desk. He seems to shave four days out of five. He doesn't play golf. He clings to such small rebellions, outward signs that he's not playing the same game played by the executives who have leapfrogged him.

When you, in your relative innocence, discover that your company is, say, overbilling its clients, the sage is the man you seek out to tell of your horror and disappointment. He draws on his cigarette, nods in that sagacious manner. If you think that's bad, he'll tell you, you should have seen the ugliness he uncovered back in '77. No, no, no, he didn't blow the whistle. His awful discovery merely confirmed his suspicions about capitalism in particular and human nature in general.

'There's nothing you can do," says the sage, "except make sure you don't become a part of it. It is possible to work here, you know, and hang on to

a shred of dignity. So long as you don't allow yourself to become like them."

At first, the office sage is a great mentor. He shows you how to play office politics without getting dirty. There are also those conversations in his smoke-filled office, real bull sessions that have you talking about things (Faulkner! Godard!) you thought you might never discuss again once you joined the workforce. But the moment you decide to try to have an actual career of some distinction, the sage will turn cold.

This change in your attitude will probably accompany some grand change in your personal life. You get married or become a father, and you realize that it's time to put away childish things (i.e., that half-completed



screenplay) and leave the ranks of corporate fuckups, of whom he is king.

This is when the sage will charge you with the crime of joining them. No longer will you spend long hours in his smoky room, plotting what to do "once we get out of this place."

The office sage plays a dangerous game. He wants to look like the Man and reap the Man's benefits while somehow keeping as aloof from the Man as a poet. And once you've stepped out of the sage's sphere of influence, a strange thing happens: He begins to look tiny and pathetic. But rest assured that by leaving him, you have actually followed the sage's sage advice. Which, if you think about it, boils down to this: Don't be like me. Whatever you do, goddammit, don't —Jim Windolf be like me!

BROOK MEINHARDT

New Junk on the Street

By Christopher Byron

A DECADE AGO, the defining gimmick on Wall Street was the leveraging of corporate balance sheets and the looting of the bondholders. This time around, it's the hijacking of the shareholders instead. To give it proper historic resonance, we'll call this the Era of Junk Equity.

At the current pace, 1997 will go down as the biggest year in history for mergers and acquisitions. The conventional wisdom is that, stock prices having reached the highest valuations in memory, companies find it cheap to use their own shares as "currency" in the takeover game.

But that's not the whole story, for deal after deal is being financed by a combination of debt and equity—especially when the price is too high for the acquiring company to swing with cash alone. It's a ploy that undermines the value of the acquiring company's shares while turning existing shareholders, like it or not, into bankrollers.

We've seen this gimmick used by Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation and by Barry Diller as he's gone about assembling his media mini-empire: the old Home Shopping Network, now known as HSN. It's been used by Time Warner to take over Turner Broadcasting, by 3Com to acquire US Robotics, by British Telecom in its \$19 billion takeover of MCI.

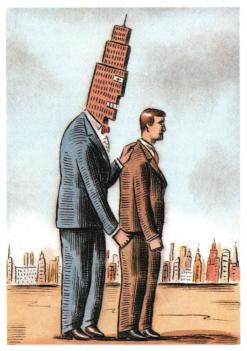
And almost without exception, companies that have issued shares in order to buy or merge with rivals have seen their share prices suffer. Thus, when Hilton offered \$10.5 billion in cash, stock, and assured debt to take over ITT at a 26 percent premium, Hilton's stock was selling for \$29. In the following month, it fell to just above \$25. When Murdoch went on his acquisition binge in the summer of 1996, his stock was selling for \$22 a

share; by the spring of 1997, it was changing hands at \$18. In many such deals, the acquiring company is loaded with debt already

but wants to take over a rival anyway.

The challenge: to do so without making its debt burden any worse.

The answer: Shanghai the shareholders. Simply print up some junk equity—a new block of stock that



won't be sold on the open market at all but will instead be traded, at a big reduction in its real market value, for the shares of the target company.

In effect, the ploy forces the acquiring company's shareholders to foot the bill. Here's why: When a big wad of cheaply valued stock gets added to the market without an equivalent increase in the asset value of the issuing company, both the book value and (in some cases) the voting rights

How to avoid getting stuck with some of it

of the existing shares are diluted.

A key reason shareholders get whacked is an accounting concept called "goodwill." When one company buys another, any price that it pays over and above the fair market value is termed goodwill and has to be written off against net income, a bit each year, by the acquiring company.

Almost every such acquisition creates at least a little goodwill, but when an acquiring company bids stock instead of cash, the goodwill in the deal can shoot into outer space. The reason: The pursuer usually has to offer a big premium for the target company's shares. Otherwise, the holders of those shares won't sell them. And don't forget, a stock offer that dangles a big premium to attract the target company's shares almost automatically exacts a big discount on the market price of the issuing company's shares.

Because of the effect of goodwill accounting on acquisitions paid for with stock, a deal that investment bankers talk up as "a great fit" can create a drag on earnings for years to come. When Disney acquired Capital Cities/ABC last year in a cash-plus-stock deal valued at \$19 billion, it had to pay a 30 percent premium to bag the Cap Cities shares. This, along with goodwill already on the balance sheet, means Disney will now be charging more than \$400 million a year against earnings for the next forty years.

In companies with multiple classes of common stock, junk-equity deals can be particularly one-sided. Multiple classes of stock—one with

www.six.degrees By Daniel Radosh

GWAR the Hell Am !?

The World Wide Web is a vast, chaotic entity. Yet just like the vast real world, cyberspace can often seem quite small. John Guare's six degrees of separation applies: Any person or thing is only six Web sites away from any other. To prove this, we connected Guare, the suave playwright, with the phonetically similar but culturally opposing punk-metal band GWAR.

John Guare: Yale Daily News interview www.yale.edu/ydn/paper/3.3/3.3.95storyno.IA.html

In this article, Guare tells his alma mater's newspaper, "There is a quality of mind [at Yale] that is never smug or self-satisfied." Elsewhere on the *YDN* site, a page of hyperlinks points those unself-satisfied students to more "stuff from the world's best university." Links to off-campus sites include . . .

The Late Night Lineups Page www.interbridge.com/lineups.html

Was it Hosni Mubarak on Tuesday's Conan and Elle Macpherson on Charlie Rose Wednesday, or are you mixed-up again? Check the week's schedules for every late-night talk show at this helpful site maintained by a woman named \dots

Sue Trowbridge www.interbridge.com/sue/sue.html

No, this semiobsessive talk-show fan is not the same Sue Trowbridge you remember from Camp Wampatuck. The highlight of this personal home page is Sue's collection of e-mail from people who thought—incorrectly—that they knew her. Anne O. writes, "I knew a 'greatly fun' woman with your name while I was at Holyoke," and Harold S. says cryptically, "[I] have fond memories of one moment." Otherwise, Sue's page consists mostly of links to favorite pop-culture sites such as . . .

Inconspicuous Consumption@Planet Lunch homearts.com/depts/pl/incosumr/00incoc1.htm

With its flashy, animated graphics, multiple "channels" of "content," and evidence of actual proofreading, Planet Lunch can only be the product of some huge media conglomerate like, say, the one that owns Esquire. Like most such sites, Planet Lunch has more money than purpose. Paul Lukas's Inconspicuous Consumption is wonderful, but it's equally good—and far easier to read on the can—in any of its several print forms. The rest of the site consists of the usual movie reviews and horoscopes, along with high-tech games that are more apt to crash your computer than amuse you. The Hot Links section recommends a visit to . . .

The Useless Pages www.go2net.com/internet/useless

An exhausting collection of links to real pages—from erotica in Esperanto to photographs of Gerald Ford's pets. Among the pages honored is . . .

Chris Barnsley's Compact Disc Database home.interlynx.net/~cbarnsle/cds.html

Who wouldn't want to peruse the complete list—sorry, database—of CDs owned by a total stranger? Plus, Barnsley flags all CDs by Canadian artists. Quick! Follow the link to . . .

The Ultimate Band List www.ubl.com

This searchable site can hook you up with lyrics, tour dates, and fan pages for almost any artist you can name, Canadian or otherwise. With one click, you're at . . .

GWAR Internet Slave Pit www.iuma.com/GWAR

You've arrived! Download tunes from the classic albums *America Must Be Destroyed* and *This Toilet Earth*. Or head to the Art Gallery, where you'll find pictures of severed heads and spewing bodily excretions . . . and not a double-sided Kandinsky in sight.

If you'd like to link up with Daniel Radosh, or throw him a challenge, you can e-mail him at sixdegrees@hearst.com.

fully vested voting rights and others with few or no such rights—are common among companies that were founded by individuals who have wound up needing to raise equity capital but want to avoid losing control. They simply create a new class of "nonvoting" stock and sell a bit of that to the public whenever they need cash.

No mogul has played the multiple-classes-of-stock game more cleverly than Murdoch, who retains a 30 percent voting control of News Corp through the company's common stock and who in the last year has added nearly \$4 billion to his balance sheet through deals paid for with a second class of stock known as "limited voting rights" shares.

It is these shares and not the Murdoch-controlled common shares that have suffered dilution from his acquisitions. In the last year, they've fallen nearly 25 percent in value, whereas the common shares have dropped by only 18 percent. Yet the Murdoch-controlled shares stand to benefit at *least* as much as the limited-voting-rights shares if the deals ever do start putting earnings on News Corp's bottom line.

So what's an investor to do to protect himself from junk equity? Simple: Before investing, check the balance sheet for anything called goodwill on the asset ledger. If the amount is more than a *fraction* of total assets, be wary, for you have proof positive that the company overpaid to acquire an asset.

Next, check the debit ledger for long-term debt. If there's a lot, be doubly wary, because this is a company that has dug itself into a hole by the very fact of overpaying.

Finally, ask your broker to tell you if the company has multiple classes of stock and, if so, what the relative rights of the classes are. If some possess voting rights and others don't, run like hell: You've stumbled on a company that's all set up to replenish wasting assets on its balance sheet by picking your pocket. Don't let it.

You can reach Christopher Byron by e-mail at CBSCOOP@aol.com.



Postgraduate Plastic

It's BEEN EXACTLY thirty years since the young Benjamin Braddock in The Graduate was taken aside to hear the whispered mantra: plastics. Long the material that dared not speak its name, agile imitator of ivory and leather, wood and metal, plastic can now speak for itself. The very exemplar of inauthenticity and superficiality has graduated into respectability.

The novel colors seem internally radiant, if not outright radioactive.

The outfit that did the most to raise plastic to a higher degree is the aptly named German firm Authentics, whose founder, Hansjerg Maier-Aichen, declares his solemn belief in "poetic objects for everyday life." In the hands of top European designers,

plastic takes on not only new forms but a confident new glow. It's polypropylene—

and proud of it. The cobalt, raspberry, and tangerine tones seem internally radiant, if not outright radioactive.

From its home base in Holzgerlingen, Authentics established itself first in Europe, then in leading U.S. design shops like Moss, in New York. Now the goods are being dispatched to the American heartland, into the very aisles of Bed, Bath & Beyond.

Authentics seeks to imbue objects with what its founder Teutonically terms the "poetry of emptiness." To which we can only respond with a moment of silence. The emptiness inside the Authentics Square wastebasket is certainly poetically shaped—from circular base to square top—and the Buca fruit

bowl's punched holes let the emptiness breathe

with metrical precision.

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The Second-Best Copilot

ONE OF THE loveliest buildings in New York City is Grace Church, a landmark on lower Broadway that dates to 1846. But hundreds of times, I've wished that graceful neo-Gothic edifice smashed to dust and its little green yard paved over.

That's because, even after two decades of driving in Manhattan, I always forget that Grace Church takes the place of a block of Eleventh Street—making that by-

Do we detect a faint hint of pride when the silicon accent announces, "You have arrived"?

way a phantom Northwest Passage out of the East Village. Oldsmobile's Guidestar navigation system never forgets the ghost block. It respects the old church and directs you happily up to Thirteenth or down to Ninth.

That saving grace alone is almost worth the two and a half grand the system adds to the price of an Olds LSS, Eighty Eight, or Bravada. That and having the crumpled road map removed from the bucket seat and fed through a neat, crisp computer screen. That and being able to push a button to find the nearest gas station, restaurant, hospital-heck, the nearest ATM.

Guidestar is only the first generation of devices that one day will likely be as common as car radios. They're already popular in congested Japan, and top-of-theline models sold in Europe have them. And Guidestar is being joined by rivals in the U.S.new systems from Lincoln, Cadillac, and others.

The device is remarkably adept. It easily plots a course to an interstate exit by name or number or to a street address in a suburban cul-de-sac. It grasps the elusive "Jersey Jug-Handle," the tight asphalt loop that passes for an interchange in Netcong or Cheesequake. It understands lanes: It knew to direct us hard right on the way to Yankee Stadium, where the thinnest of dotted lines separates you from the Major Deegan southbound and a replay of the South Bronx scene in The Bonfire of the Vanities.

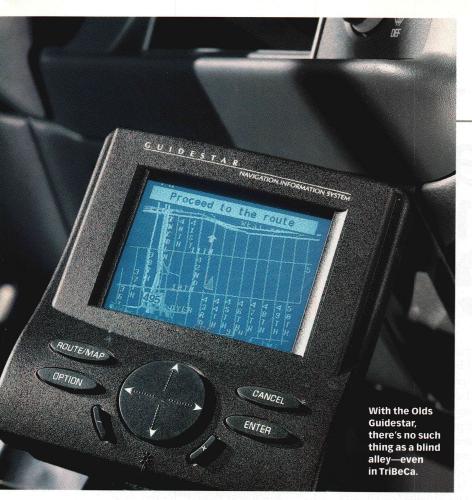
But the tangled infrastructure of a major metropolis is the acid test. In TriBeCa, we punched in an address not far from the old Fillmore East. The controls are simple: no keyboard, only four buttons to navigate through menus and alphabets. Guidestar combines the navigational technique of Columbus and Magellan-dead reckoningwith that of the Joint Chiefs of Staff: the Global Positioning System, so handy for sailing cruise missiles down commandbunker air vents. Positions computed from the two dozen GPS satellites are compared with input from speedometer, compass, gyroscope, and a digital map cartridge. The resulting courseyou can opt for freeway or surface,



shortest or quickest-is displayed on a map and explained by arrows and voice directions.

The GPS antenna is mounted on the rear deck, the computer is hidden in the trunk, and the screen, which sits on a centrally mounted stalk, can be removed to s avoid theft. The four-inch screen offers the crudest of graphics, but they're clear and direct: Maps are





superseded by arrows as a voice announces, "Right turn ahead." While one might wish for the authority of James Earl Jones or the Teutonic taskmasters available in Europe, the voice, though clearly male, is as affectless as a robot's. (In Europe, Mercedes lets you fantasize that you're being bossed around by a Fassbinder heroine.)

Begun in 1994 as an Avis pilot program to help drivers who didn't know their way around San Jose, California, Guidestar now covers thirty states, with more being added monthly. The system is based on data cartridges that pop into the computer. These electronic maps cover roughly a hundredmile radius in major metro areas and two or three states in less densely populated parts of the country. Cartridges can be purchased only from the dealerfor around \$350, making a Maineto-Miami trip expensive to ₹ navigate—and to change them 5 you have to stop and open the

trunk. The ideal system would have interchangeable CD-ROMs. It would also include real-time traffic reports to vector you around the hostage situation, say, in the Lincoln Tunnel. Such systems are common in Europe, but commercial radio in the U.S. has stifled the establishment of a standard signal system.

From TriBeCa, Guidestar set us on a straightforward course east and north. It was even smart enough to minimize those right turns-important, since New York City doesn't allow right turns at red lights.

But even with traffic updates, no system could have anticipated what befell me in TriBeCa as I followed Guidestar's arrows: the massive metal bulk of a Five Brothers garbage truck making its painfully slow way down the block to the accompaniment of grinding hydraulics and metal cans being dragged across cobbles.

You can reach Phil Patton by e-mail at philpatton@MSN.com.

OTHER WAYS TO GO

BMW'S NAVIGATION SYSTEM, On-Board, from Philips in Europe, is available on 5- and 7-series models as a \$2,800 option. It operates much like Guidestar but is tied to the cell phone for emergency calls. Its screen is brown, to match the wooden dash. Instead of buttons, you use a single knob and push button to navigate a screen of choices. It's harder to program than Guidestar, and its CD-ROM is slow to load. (It took a full half minute—we counted—to throw up the map.) Directions are more specific—"Move right now," before a congested interchange, "Turn right onto the freeway"-but its database of businesses and restaurants is skimpy.

Another, wholly different approach comes from Lincoln and Cadillac, which add GPS to a hands-free cellular phone to create a security and roadside-assistance system. Lincoln's RESCU (Remote Emergency Satellite Cellular Unit), introduced with the 1996 Continental, provides buttons on the car phone for roadside assistance. In case of crime or injury, GPS locates the car and sends help.

In Cadillac's OnStar system, directions are proffered not onscreen but from a distant command post, by a live person with a reassuring roadside manner. They can be recorded for playback in the car. If an air bag is deployed, the car automatically phones the central office, which dispatches police and ambulance. If you lock yourself out, a phone call gets your doors opened automatically. You can also use the system to book a hotel room or a table at a restaurant. You can even send a dozen roses if you're running late.

Clarion and Alpine are adding nav as a natural extension of their sophisticated CD systems. The CD-ROM on which map and other nav data are stored is just another disc in the changer.

Of course, if a shrewd entrepreneur charged the banks and burger chains, the motels and museums, for inclusion on the map, he could give the machines away like the Yellow Pages.

Trave

Havana on the Verge

For an american, every moment in Havana is charged with furtive pleasures that others can only guess at.

The rest of the world's turistas might enjoy the shock of recognition when they first set eyes on Old Havana, with its dreamy, decrepit beauty, its rotting rococo terraces in candy-bar pastels, and

> its talismanic 1950s Chevys and Buicks rattling along the streets. (More often, they're idled for want of gas, but they still look damn poetic.) For an American, though, the fundamental thrillwhich gives even the most banal Havana moment a secret frissoncomes from simply being there, in the heart of your

As a yanqui in Havana, you've got history. The last bas-

and most defiant,

cold-war enemy.

country's last,

tion is open for inspection, and now's the time to catch it, before Fidel gives up the ghost and Golden Arches rise over the Malecón.

The propaganda billboards may have been toned down

(Señores Helms and Burton come in for public abuse—happily, Cubans won't hold you personally responsible for el bloqueo), but every other totem of Caribbean communism is lovingly maintained.

And Havana has a long memory. Displayed in the center of town is a replica of Granma, the yacht Fidel and Che washed up in to start the revolution. The Museo de la Revolución has fragments of U.S. spy planes and mangled relics from the Bay of Pigs. The pièce de résistance is El Rincón de los Cretinosthe Corner of the Cretins-with its cartoon cutouts of dictator Fulgencio Batista and Ronald Reagan.

Of course, everything—even a Marxist icon like the sainted Che, whom you can take home on a refrigerator magnet, among other things—is a commodity in today's Havana. Tourist apartheid, never pretty, is even less so in this former stronghold of the Common Man. Wherever you go, you'll encounter a constant parade of jineteros, street hustlers, hawking their wares. This gives life in Havana a neurotic, jumpy edge that you'll have to embrace if you're going to enjoy the city; lap up the kitsch, bask in the weirdness, fall into loopy chats with History of Imperialism professors, penniless Sandinistas, and

exotic exiles. (That big bald guy with the American accent might be Bill Brent, the former Black Panther, who's been stuck here since his take-me-to-Havana act in 1969.)

Havana is hardly a time warp, but just as they did in the 1950s, most foreigners stay in the hotels of Vedado-the affluent suburb that grew up as Miami's twisted alter ego, its art-deco flourishes now fading in the tropical sun. From here, it's easy to make surgical strikes into the rest of the city. Hop a cab past the Riviera, where Meyer Lansky once kept a suite (of his Cuban casinos, the Jewish Godfather rue-



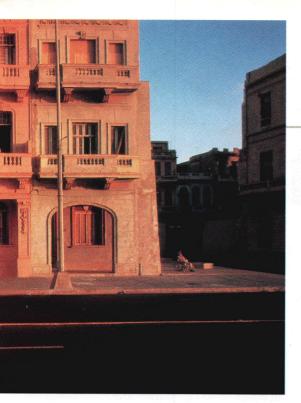
After dark, the city backslides to the decadent pleasures of Our Man in Havana.

YOU CAN GET THERE FROM HERE

CUBANS WELCOME American travelers (and their dollars) with open arms. It's Uncle Sam that's the party pooper.

The U.S. government doesn't precisely ban its citizens from visiting Cuba; it just forbids them to spend any money there. Still, a steady flow of Americans slips into Havana via third countries. Ask the Cubans not to stamp your passport, don't fill your bags with Havana cigars, and nobody will be the wiser. You're not likely to be prosecuted for quietly going to Cuba; just don't hold a press conference about it when you get back.

The most efficient way to go is via Canada. The Cuba Tourist Board (416-362-0700) will recommend Canadian agencies that can arrange your trip. A good choice is A. Nash Travel, which offers one-week packages from Montreal or Toronto, putting you up at Havana's atmospheric Hotel Nacional or the glitzy



fully admitted, "I crapped out"), and alight in Old Havana, Cuba's decaying heart, the most spectacular port in the Caribbean.

This is no tourist set piece, trussed up in stucco like Old San Juan. The mansions and tenements are literally falling to pieces, and families are packed into every room. (Keep an eye out for packages of shit wrapped in newspaper tossed from upper windows, since some places don't have plumbing.) But despite such Hogarthian touches, capitalism has taken hold:

new five-star Meliá Cohiba, for around \$1,100 a head—but there are plenty of perfectly adequate hotels for half that price. The company will mail you your tickets, visa, and coupons, or you can pick them up at the airport in Canada (800-818-2004, ext. 221; ask for Jury—seriously).

The government now

Option two is via Cancún. A. Nash will take you that route, too, or you can book everything direct with Cubana Air (011-52-98-860-192). A private agency run by Maraia Raquel Aguilar and her son Pancho (011-52-98-877-314) can line up neat extras like your own VW with a driver, who'll pick you up at the airport and guide you around Havana for a mere \$25 daily.

Finally, there's the route via Nassau. Majestic Travel (242-328-0908) arranges flights for \$202 round-trip; a week at the Nacional goes for \$796 sinallows families to open small restaurants, then tries to tax them out of existence. In the ongoing chaos, coffee stands and living-room diners, known as paladares, are proving as resilient as tropical mold. They may provide the best meals in Havana at \$5 a plate—sweet Cuban coffee included.

The profit motive has long since mummified the memory of Old Havana's favorite expat, Hemingway: Everywhere Ernesto slept, brawled, or, especially, drank has been turned into a sacred site. His favorite bar. El Floridita, now renovated, is charmless and breathtakingly expensive. (If you go, don't miss the framed 1959 clip from Esquire, which ranks the place among the world's seven best bars—it did, after all, give us the daiquiri.)

Luckily, within staggering distance is Hemingway's other watering hole, La Bodeguita del Medio. The storefront bar still dishes out his best-loved tipple, the mojito—an eye-watering brew of rum, sugar,

lime juice, and crushed mint leaves—as fast as Papa's pilgrims can slug it back.

gle, \$1,152 double. You have to guarantee your booking with a credit card, then complete the paperwork at the airport, where an agent will meet you.

Finally, what do you do for money? Thanks to the

U. S. embargo, American credit cards and traveler's checks are useless. The obvious solution is to prepay as much as you can and take lots of cash. (The U. S. dollar is the effective currency in Cuba.)

It's a good idea to take an extra \$100 in singles, for tips and small purchases. (Nobody seems to have a lot of change in Havana.) And pack a few bars of soap. Most Cubans are short of even basic commodities, and things like chocolate, hairbrushes, socks, and old jeans make valued tips—and more personal gifts than just peeling a few bucks from the wad.





Beneath the Cuban capital's elegiac skyline, Tropicana dancers still strut: ancient Chevvs rumble through the salt spray on the Malecón; and at La Bodeguita del Medio, the lusty puerco criollo con moros y cristianos, or Creole pork with Moors and Christians," goes for \$20.

But in Havana right now, the ruling spirit is less hearty Hemingway than guilty Graham Greene; the city can seem as if it has backslid to the decadent pleasures of Our Man in Havana, especially after dark. For a night on the town, drop by the Tropicana, where sequin-spangled mulattas have never stopped performing in their open-air "paradise under the stars," then head for the

disco at the Hotel Comodoro. The Eurotrash crowd gyrates to American rap; dozens of gorgeous jineteras, or prostitutes, swoop on every lone male; Canadians chomp cigars and gargle cuba libres; and outside the door, Communist Youth with party chits line up for their slim chance of admission.

Sex, dollars, useless party coupons: That's Havana in nuce these days. How can anyone miss the show? -WILL ONSLOW

Is Any Pasta Worth \$30?

Noodles are—what?—fifty cents' worth of egg, flour, and water-maybe less. Add two tablespoons of butter at about a nickel a throw. Toss on a pharmaceutical-size gram or two of a gnarled fungus called tartufi

bianchi that grows under a tree and you're up to . . . fifty bucks!

Maybe that's why the waiter neglected to quote you the price.

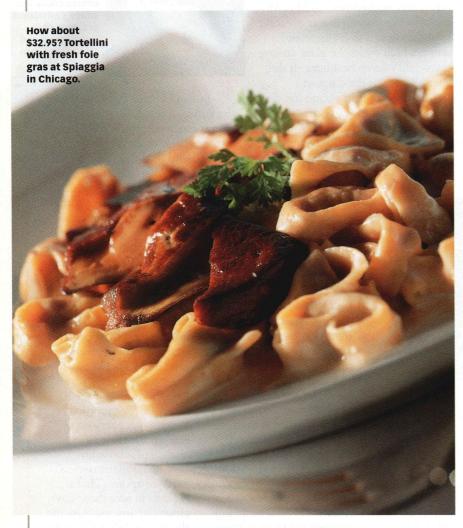
There are some Italian restaurants that gouge royally on this item—including a wiseguy hangout in Manhattan that charges you whatever it thinks it can get away with, like \$90 a plate. But more straightahead restaurateurs really don't make the vig on such dishes. Consider that the best white truffles—which cannot be cultivated and can be found only by specially

bred and trained hounds (\$3,000 per pup) under the soil beneath oak and linden trees in the vicinity of Alba in Italy's Piedmont from mid-November through December cost up to \$1,600 a pound, or \$100 an ounce. If you get fifteen-odd grams on your pasta, the dish tops \$50 in raw materials alone. Capisce?

Yet at Houston's posh Tony's (1801 Post Oak Boulevard; 713-622-6778), featherweight pappardelle showered with white truffles is a loss leader at \$50. At New York's deluxe Felidia (243 East Fifty-eighth Street; 212-758-1479), I consider it a bargain to feast on the most tender risotto imaginable covered with a mantle of white truffles for only \$35.

You ask, Isn't it a little ridiculous to pay that kind of money for any pasta? I ask, Why do the same guys who don't flinch at paying \$29 for sirloin or \$45 for a two-pound lobster (potatoes not included) cooked by an automaton at a steak-house chain balk at paying the tab for the kind of ingredients and workmanship that go into making a great pasta dish?

I've eaten some very expensive pastas; they rank with the finest dishes I've ever eaten. There's the handmade garganelli at New York's San Domenico (240 Central Park South; 212-265-5959). Chef Odette Fada gently tosses it with shallots and a little cream, then tops it with a generous portion of glistening, silvery-black Sevruga for only \$22.50. (Downtown, the hip but depress-



ingly subterranean Pravda charges \$26 for the caviar alone, no pasta.)

At Goldoni in Washington, D. C. (1113 Twenty-third Street NW; 202-293-1511), Fabrizio Aielli does a foie gras ravioli pumped up with lobster meat and a benediction of white truffles, a concept so sumptuous-and so sensible!that you shouldn't mind paying \$40 for a plate of it.

I dream about the tortellini made by Paul Bartolotta of Chicago's Spiaggia (980 North Michigan Avenue; 312-280-2750). He stuffs the delicate little pasta packets with turkey, pork, sausage, pancetta, and prosciutto, smothers them with foie gras and duck livers pureed into a cream sauce, and tops it all with slices of fresh, sautéed foie gras—a dauntingly rich and glorious dish for \$32.95.

When the fabulous, meaty wild Italian mushrooms called ovoli-not the dried, reconstituted porcini most restaurants use or the bitter portobellos that are nothing more than big, fat white mushrooms-come to the American market, Piero Selvaggio of Valentino in Santa Monica (3115 Pico Boulevard; 310-829-4313) doesn't care what they cost. He knows cognoscenti will happily fork over \$30 for a plate of them tumbled with tagliarini and butter. Selvaggio also brings in a rare Mediterranean bottarga—the dried roe of the gray mullet-and slices it in paper-thin shards of translucent amber over fresh pasta. It runs about \$30. In a dish like that, you find the ineffable taste of what the wind brings in from the saline sea off Siracusa. Maybe even a vision of Sophia Loren rising from the waves.

How many \$30 sirloins can make that claim?

You can reach John Mariani by e-mail at johnmariani@prodigy.com.

The Drinking Man

Are You HIP Enough for Rosé?

"I HAVE THIS flipped-out idea that rosés may actually be the greatest, most subtle, most noble wines in the world-only we don't know it," says Randall Grahm, proprietor of California's premier rosé maker, Bonny Doon Vineyards.

Pardon us for being confused. We Americans haven't been spoiled with the world's finest rosés the way we have with, say, the most coveted Bordeaux. This may be because the better rosés haven't been able to wedge themWe've got to get our heads right to appreciate this stuff.



Mediterranean seductions. These characteristics may not truly qualify rosé as the world's greatest wine, at least in the British, hang-the-grouse, fetch-the-an-

cient-crusted-port sense. But there are a lot of other senses.

Most of them can be engaged along the summertime beaches of the South of France and Corsica, There, at restaurants right on the sand, you can park yourself barefoot under an umbrella and wait out the noonday sun with a plate of garlicky shrimp or a black-olive pizza or a charcoal-grilled chicken. Think of these shady, salt-air sanctuaries as rosé's spiritual home.

Sip a cold rosé with such smoky, salty, grilled fare and you'll get the picture. The best rosés have the chilled-down. sheer refreshment of drier white wines, with some of the body and punch of reds. In at least two ways, rosés are transcendent. From pale crimson to deep salmon-pink, they are the most beautiful wines on the planet. And there's nothing else you'd want with a Virginia-ham sandwich.

Still, notes Grahm, "In America, it takes supreme self-confidence to order a rosé, because the people who drink them are either terminally hip or terminally unhip." The point is, there's still time to get out in front on this thing. -RICHARD NALLEY

UNCORKING IT

Rosés are made from all kinds of red-wine grapes (usually by siphoning off the juice from the color-rich skins soon after fermentation) and in styles from bone-dry to something resembling a melted lollipop. In general, European rosés are drier than low-end American blush wines, but the better American rosés also fall at the drier end of the spectrum. And remember that, with few exceptions, rosés are freshest and best within a year or two of vintage.

BONNY DOON VIN GRIS DE CIGARE (\$8.50, California). Sure, there's a spaceship on the label, but this is quality stuff-mouth-filling, flavorful, and dry.

CHÂTEAU D'AQUERIA TAVEL ROSÉ (\$14, France). A high-class picnic wine from the Rhône Valley. It's dry, but with a bright, soothing, almost candied fruitiness.

DOMAINE BRUNO CLAIR MARSANNAY ROSÉ (\$18, France). Made from burgundy pinot noir, this may be the most grown-up rosé around. Very dry, even austere, it's a rosé for dinner indoors.

DOMAINES OTT CHÂTEAU DE SELLE (\$27, France), If you refuse to pay less, a famous rosé from the Riviera. It's delicious, with a filled-in weight and subtle fruitiness.

DOMAINE TEMPIER BANDOL (\$24, France). This smooth, dry, often intensely flavored rosé from Provence is such an insider's summer wine that new vintages tend to evaporate before the first frost

JOSEPH PHELPS VIN DU MISTRAL GRENACHE ROSÉ (\$12.50, California). Crimson, like many Grenache-based rosés, with the grape's tart, wild-raspberry-like fruitiness.

SANFORD 1996 PINOT NOIR—VIN GRIS (\$12, California). Pale-copper colored, it's soft, supple, and subtle.

> selves in among the surfeit of domestic "blush" wines-those treacly white zinfandels that are to fine rosés what Pop Tarts are to breakfast pastries. In America. rosé needs an image makeover.

The Man in the Glass House

[continued from page 53] was undergoing. An increasing preoccupation with Eastern spiritual disciplines-particularly Hindu Vedantic philosophy, with its emphasis on karma and reincarnation, and Zen Buddhism, with its stress on the abandonment of ego in order to experience personal detachment and the oneness of creation—began showing up in his short stories in the early fifties. But Hamilton reveals that S.'s moving to Cornish didn't initially mean embracing a solitary spiritual life. At least at first, S. led a very active social life, both with adult neighbors in Cornish and (more curiously) with a crowd of high school youths in Windsor, the larger town across a covered bridge in Vermont. According to Hamilton, who tracked down some of S.'s high school pals, "He used to be a ball of fun," as one of them put it. "He was forever entertaining the high school kids-he bought us meals and drinks. He was very interested in the basketball and football games.... After the Spa [an after-school hangout], we used to pile into his jeep and go up to his house. It was always open house up there." "We all looked up to him," recalled another, "especially the renegades."

But then came the Betrayal, the original media sin. Apparently, one of the Windsor High School students asked S. for an interview for the high school page of a local paper. He gave her the interview, but the paper, the Claremont Daily Eagle, ran it like a scoop. According to a Life-magazine account of the episode quoted by Hamilton, "'The next time a carload of them drove up to Salinger's home, he did not seem to be at home. . . . When they tried again, they found the house 'totally hidden behind a solid, impenetrable, man-tall, woven wood fence." Interviews interfere with his mission, S. told a photographer at the time. No more "until I've completed what I set out to do."

The Era of the Wall had begun. For S. within his Wall, it was a period of increased preoccupation with spiritual questions, signaled in the famous epigraph about silence he added that year to the hardcover edition of his first short-story collection, *Nine Stories*:

We know the sound of two hands clapping But what is the sound of one hand clapping? —A Zen koan

It all added to the mystique: What was going on behind the Wall, what

kind of silent quest? The Wall excluded the world but lured it, too, inspiring quests of its own, wild speculations. In one of his later stories, S.'s narrator/ alter ego speaks of the rumors that he spent "six months of the year in a Buddhist monastery and the other six in a mental institution."

There were many indications of rural normality as well: There was marriage to a young Englishwoman, Claire Douglas; there were children, Matt and Peggy; there was a yearlong live-in liaison with a young writer, Joyce Maynard; and then another marriage. The man wasn't a complete hermit or a monk. But there was a growing sense that the Wall that kept the world out had somehow succeeded in imprisoning S., walling him in. In DeLillo's novel about the Salingerlike novelist, there's an implicit parallel between a poet held hostage by terrorists in some basement in Beirut and the novelist held hostage in his little room, hostage to the terror of celebrity-or to the terrifying magnitude of his own vision of perfection.

IN WHICH S.'S HEALING PHILOSOPHY IS DISCLOSED

At the very least, it seemed increasingly to wall in his work. In the dozen years after he built the wall in 1953, he published just four short stories; then came "Hapworth" and thirty-two years of silence. There was a growing sense among readers and critics that he was walling himself in imaginatively as well, writing with increasing obsessiveness about the insular inwardness of the Glass family (the Corleones of the sensitive lit set), a big New York family whose seven children are haunted and tormented in various ways by the enigmatic spirituality-and mysterious suicide—of the firstborn, Seymour. Guru, poet, avatar, former child prodigy and quiz-kid celebrity, Seymour, we learn in the "Hapworth" story (which takes the bizarre form of a twenty-thousandword-long letter from an impossibly precocious seven-year-old Seymour writing home from summer camp), is himself haunted by visions of his past lives-his previous incarnational "appearances," as he calls them. And by a premonition of his own death, the gunshot suicide described cryptically in "A Perfect Day for Bananafish"—a story, a suicide, that has launched a thousand

Ph.D. dissertations, all attempting to explain why Seymour silenced himself.

Was S. committing slow artistic suicide within the Wall, silencing himself within the Glass house of his Glassfamily chronicle? Or had he achieved some strange new level of spiritual or artistic transcendence—writing that no longer required the ego validation of publication or readers, at least within his lifetime? Or—horrible thought—was he writing now only for God's eye and planning to pull a Gogol: feed the work to the flames before he died?

Those of us who cared rushed to rustle up faded Xeroxes of the "Hapworth" story and search it for clues, once the announcement was made of S.'s decision to permit the story a life beyond the Wall again. At one point in "Hapworth"—S.'s most hermetic and self-referential work—little Seymour Glass seems to offer some signals about the silence of his creator.

In speaking of the karmic homework he needs to do, Seymour mentions the need to "move as silently as possible" and then cites an Eastern sage, Tsiang Samdup (in a way that presumes we are, of course, familiar with his authority), on Silence: "Silence! Go forth, but tell no man," the estimable Samdup enjoins us, according to little Seymour. Which hints at what S. might be doing: continuing to go forth with his writing but telling no man—not publishing what he's written. Until perhaps he's well on his way to the next incarnation.

The "Hapworth" story also offers us a tantalizing preview of the next never-seen Salinger story—the one he may have written but shown only to God, or perhaps the one he's been writing and revising, unable to finish. For all we know, it might be the story that silenced him. We know about this story, or we think we do, because seven-year-old Seymour in "Hapworth" foresees both the event that occasions it and the story that his brother Buddy, Salinger's alter ego, will write about the event. Is it just an accident that this story, the story that may have silenced S., is a story about a Temptation and a Fall into Celebrity? About the sudden celebrity that the Glass-family children fall into as wunderkind stars of a radio quiz show called It's a Wise Child. An exposure to publicity that would leave them all scarred and wounded in various ways. The putative post-"Hapworth" story can be seen as an allegory of the wounds S. himself experienced in his sudden transformation into a wunderkind celebrity.

Wounds, yes: Let us return again to the Fake Wounds Story, in which a possibly wounded S. inside his wall is confronted by a fraudulently wounded seeker moaning outside the wall. What happened, the somewhat chagrined fake-wounds victim told me, was that soon after he was dumped off, ketchupsmeared, moaning, the lights came on in the house behind the wall "as if someone was watching." And then, after a while, the lights went off. Then nothing. Silence. No one came out. Eventually, his friends returned, and they all slunk off. They didn't come away from it thinking S. was cruel or heartless. Rather, they got the feeling that the fake-wounds thing had been tried before: that it had become a regular routine for seekers to bear wounds, both real and false, to the wall. That S. had somehow developed the ability to diagnose the difference between blood and ketchup, between real pain and its simulation. This jibes somewhat with the story Ionathan Schwartz, the writer and radio personality, told me about a woman he knew who'd made the pilgrimage with her five-year-old child. She'd gone as far as knocking on S.'s door, and when he wouldn't let her in, she told him she had a tired, ailing child in her car. At that point, S. became enormously solicitous, invited them both in, and fed and played with the child for hours while they all watched the Marx brothers' Monkey Business and an episode of I Love Lucy.

Saint Francis of Assisi or Michael Jackson? The saint and the strangely reclusive celebrity both draw the wounded. The Fake Wounds Story has stayed with me because it seems to explain the powerful attraction of the Wall, the compelling seductiveness of the silence a writer like S. surrounds himself with. The power that lures us, either in person or metaphorically, to S.'s Wall is a feeling that the silence betokens some special knowledge, some wisdom, the penetration of some unutterable mystery beyond words, beyond speech, expressible only in silence. The Wall he's built is, metaphorically, a place where we can bring our real wounds to be examined, healed-the wounds, the holes in our soul, the empty places eaten away by a sense of inauthenticity, by the ravages of celebrity culture.

Which brings me to the rather extraordinary discovery I made about S. as a healer in the course of pursuing various inquiries about the Man Behind the Wall-something I believe has never been reported before. It's a revelation I was led to very indirectly by a chain of random connections and one that contradicts the conventional wisdom of an S. utterly in thrall to Eastern religious disciplines. While it's true that Eastern disciplines have their appeal for him, in fact the healing discipline that, for a time, at least, most appealed to him, one he also expounded upon to others, is a far more down-home, Western system of healing: homeopathy. Yes, homeopathy, the heretical alternative system of diagnosis and healing invented by the German physician Samuel Hahnemann in the late eighteenth century, one long dismissed by mainstream medicine, one taken up again by new-age healers, one reportedly still relied upon by the British Royal Family, among others.

Why homeopathy? Part of the appeal might lie in the way the German Romanticism of Hahnemann's healing system offered a bridge between the physical and the metaphysical, transcended the dualism of mind and body that S.'s child avatars like Teddy in Nine Stories and Seymour in "Hapworth" railed against. Homeopathy is all about the interpenetrating resonance of the two realms. Setting aside the question of its scientific validity, one can find a metaphoric poetry in homeopathy's attempt to explain itself that I'd suggest would resonate with S.'s solitary ab-

sent presence.

Old Samuel Hahnemann believed in treating similars with similars: that an infinitesimal dose of what was making you ill could make you better. If, for instance, you were vomiting, homeopathy prescribed tiny doses of nausea-inducing herbs. More peculiarly and controversially, Hahnemann believed that the more he diluted his remedies in distilled water, the more powerful they became. This has led critics to claim that at their "highest potency," i.e., their greatest dilution, his homeopathic remedies were diluted to the point of invisibility and that homeopathic doctors were essentially prescribing nothing but distilled water to their patients. To which homeopathic defenders poetically reply, It's not the presence of the curative herb in the water but the

"potentizing" imprint the once-present, now-absent dose has left on the molecular-level configuration of the fluid. A memory of an encounter, now somehow inscribed in water.

I'm not defending the science, just admiring the poetry of a healing system in which absence and memory have more power than presence-and suggesting that somewhere in this homeopathic rhetoric there is a metaphor for S.'s own absence and invisibility in our culture: that the withdrawal of his presence has left his memory, his influence, perhaps even his healing power more potent than an undiluted presence would be. That his silence is a kind of homeopathic remedy for the disease of noise we all suffer from.

I learned some other surprising things about S. in the course of my inquiries. I learned that in addition to the Glass-family chronicle, he has also written a screenplay, a draft of some kind, in which his faithful Glass-family narrator and alter ego, Buddy, is forced to confront criticism of the increasingly murky and mystical turn S.'s later Seymour-obsessed Glass-family stories have taken. (I'd pay to see that.) I've also heard, though I'm less sure of this, that he may have written some film scripts under a pseudonym for European producers.

I learned that he's not a Howard Hughes-like recluse, that he has traveled here and abroad, that he's tuned in to the culture around him, hasn't walled himself off from it.

And finally, I learned what his favorite junk food is. I learned this from a friend who happened to find herself standing behind S. at a deli counter where he's a regular. S. was complaining about the way his soppressata, a rustic salami, was sliced (he likes it "thinly sliced and layered," like the prose in his early New Yorker stories), a concern that may be a tribute to his late father, Sol, a meat and cheese importer. I asked my friend to speak to the deli clerk and found out the astonishing fact that S.'s favorite junk food is (I swear) doughnut holes! The pastry equivalent of the sound of one hand clapping.

But of all these revelations, the one about homeopathy strikes me as the most powerful truth about who S. is: if not a healer then an investigator of illness in the largest sense of the word, a literary diagnostician of the sickness, or slickness unto death, we suffer from

as individuals and as a culture.

His remedy? I learned that S. had a particular interest in a homeopathic remedy called lycopodium, a variety of club moss, diluted to near invisibility, of course. A quick check of the homeopathic literature produced the fascinating disclosure that there is among Hahnemann disciples something known as "the lycopodium personality." Described by one British practitioner as "diffident, conscientious, meticulous but self-conscious . . . [lycopodians] dislike public appearances [italics mine] and may take offense easily. . . . "

I had an uncanny feeling that in reading the homeopathic literature about the lycopodium personality, I was glimpsing at one remove the way S. diagnoses his own persona. And perhaps a clue to his decision to release the "Hapworth" story. A medicine for melancholy from Dr. S., a tiny but highly potentized dose of his presence injected afresh into the bloodstream of the culture, an infinitesimal opening in the Wall around himself, in the hope of evoking, in homeopathic fashion, a Presence, a memory of an Absence-lycopodium for the soul, ours and his.

THE CATCHER IN THE DRIVEWAY

As I crossed the border from Massachusetts to New Hampshire, heading northwest on a wintry-bright, suddenthaw late-February morning, I found myself haunted by several questions about my pilgrimage to S.'s Wall.

First, would I find the place at all? Not having the address, I was depending on the kindness of strangers to guide me there, although I'd heard that the flinty New Hampshire townspeople in Cornish were not known for their kindness to strangers seeking S. Of course, in a way I almost hoped I wouldn't be able to find the place: It would mean that S.'s neighbors had, in effect, built a wall around the Wall.

I took the exit off Route 89 at West Lebanon and headed south toward Cornish on a rural route that clung to the banks of the icebound Connecticut River, having no idea what to do once I reached Cornish.

After the recent New York magazine story disclosing Pynchon's location, or at least his neighborhood, S. may be the last private person left in America. I wanted to find the place, but I feared finding it—feared that (even if I would never publish the address or the directions there) I might pose a threat, however symbolic, to that last preserve of privacy, an endangered species of privacy now nearly extinct. I feared also the questions I'd have to face if I did find it, questions about myself, what I'd do facing S.'s Wall, whether I'd intrude. Interrogating S.'s silence, facing his Wall, would inevitably entail interrogating, facing, a side of myself I might not want to see.

But, as fate would have it, a half hour after arriving in Cornish, I found myself at the bottom of S.'s driveway, gazing up at the NO TRESPASSING signs, considering my next step and the ethical, literary, philosophical di-

lemmas it posed.

I found this place fast—not because it is easy to find but because I was lucky. That it was blind luck was something I confirmed in the two days I spent in Cornish afterward, testing the townspeople and the wall around the Wall; asking them to lead me to S.'s place and getting turned down. Some told me they didn't know the way; some told me they didn't know who S. was; some told me they wouldn't tell me if they did know; some told me they did know but wouldn't tell me; some told me, "The gentleman likes his privacy" or variations of that sentiment. At one general store, a guy told me that college students from Dartmouth still came regularly looking for it, but "folks don't tell" and he wouldn't. At another general store, I was told, with a disapproving sneer, "We don't give out that information."

So there was a wall around the Wall in S.'s adopted hometown. But not an impregnable wall.

In the parking lot of one of the general stores, after being sent off with a discouraging, disparaging "folks don't tell," I chanced upon an elderly couple in an aging pickup truck. I told them, "My boss sent me up here to find I.D. Salinger's house, you know, just the house, not to bother him. Any chance you could help me?" The old fellow in the pickup-truck cab started giving me elaborate directions that ended vaguely: "Follow the road to the top of the hill; then it kind of gets complicated to describe. You'd better just ask some people when you get up there."

That didn't sound too promising to me, asking people around there. But I was able, with some difficulty, to persuade the guy to let me follow him in my car as he drove to the place. And so we set off. I'm going to cover my tracks at this point. Let's just say that after a long drive and a long stretch of road that a sudden thaw had turned into hubcap-deep mud, the truck stopped at a driveway featuring the only mailbox on the route that had no name on it.

I got out of my car and went up to

the cab of the truck.

"Is this it?" I asked the ancient one. "This is it," he said, gesturing up a driveway that slanted up a wooded slope to a house heavily screened by trees—a house on a hill that, even from below, one could see, could well offer the proverbial "view of five states."

'You're sure this is it?" I said.

He nodded and waited, watching, I think protectively, to see what I'd do. He seemed to satisfy himself that I had no plans for an actual intrusion and drove off.

Of course, it is marginally possible that he was part of S.'s roving disinformation squad, specifically detailed to mislead strangers in town seeking S., directing them to a designated false S. address. But that sounded more Pynchonesque in its paranoia

than Salingeresque.

I looked for other signs. The driveway slanting up the slope to the tree-screened house matched others' descriptions. The existence of a second, older building on the property matched accounts of S.'s building a new structure in the late sixties after a divorce. I didn't see a physical wall, but I later learned that when S. built the new structure on his property, the old wall was replaced by the now-tall stand of trees that screened and guarded the place. I was pretty confident this was the place. The orphaned GET ON TARGET! junk-mail flyer in the Valley News mailbox seemed ironic, poetic confirmation.

Assuming this was S.'s abode, assuming I had the right target in sight, what were my options? I could:

(1) Violate the NO TRESPASSING sign, violate my own previously established ground rules, violate S.'s peace by going up the driveway and knocking on the door. But I just couldn't do that. I remembered the hunted, haunted, trespassed-and-violated look on S.'s face when a paparazzo caught him by surprise nearly ten years ago. Don DeLillo

told me it was the sight of this terrified photo that inspired him to write *Mao II*, his meditation on a reclusive writer and the terror of celebrity. I felt bad enough just being here, felt that my presence outside his driveway was already a kind of karmic violation I would have to pay for with several unpleasant future lives. I could not take that step. I would not knock on his door.

(2) Wait here long enough and hope to find S. coming or going. Which would amount to staking him out, or "doorstepping" him, as the Brittab phrase has it. I couldn't do that.

(3) Just soak in the silence surrounding S.'s abode. Pay my silent respects to the Wall and go. When I'd confided to Jonathan Schwartz my misgivings about actually going up to S.'s place, he'd dismissed my hesitation. He had thought of it often, he said. He would not hesitate to do it, "just to breathe the same oxygen." So I breathed in the springlike oxygen and tuned in to the sounds of S.'s silence, tuned in to the sound of a rushing rivulet of thawmelted snow burbling down the slope from S.'s house to the road. A distant bird cry. The deep, soulful soughing of the wind through S.'s trees.

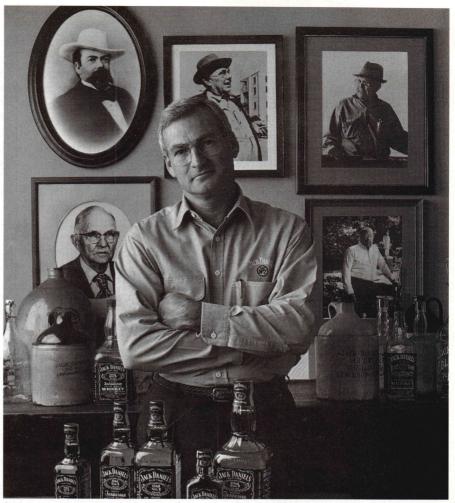
A man passed by, walking a dog. "This is the Salinger house, isn't it?" I said.

He smiled in a friendly way but said, "I can't answer that."

I listened to the silence. S.'s silent presence is like an unvoiced koan, a trick question that forces one to question oneself. I meditated upon S.'s silence, upon the absence of it in my life, upon all the other absences in my life. I began to feel very sad; I began to feel S.'s sadness, his sorrow and pity for a world filled with unenlightened souls like mine.

But then I thought about the famous Fat Lady passage in Franny and Zooey. You recall: the one in which Franny, the oversensitive, spiritually obsessed youngest sister of the departed guru Seymour, is suffering a nervous breakdown because she can't take the insensitive and hypocritical chitchat of the benighted souls that surround her in her tony college. She wants to withdraw from the world, find a pure communion with Jesus through incessant prayer, prayer so incessant that after a while it becomes the pure, silent language of the heart.

Zooey, one of Franny's brothers,



Clockwise from top left, that's Jack Daniel, Jess Motlow, Lem Tolley, Frank Bobo and Jess Gamble. (Jimmy's in the middle.)

JACK DANIEL'S HEAD DISTILLER, Jimmy Bedford, has lots of folks looking over his shoulder.

Since 1866, we've had only six head distillers. (Every one a Tennessee boy, starting with Mr. Jack Daniel himself.) Like those before him, Jimmy's mindful of our traditions, such as the oldtime way we smooth our whiskey through 10 feet of hard maple charcoal. He knows Jack Daniel's drinkers will judge him with every sip. So he's not about to change a thing. The five gentlemen on his wall surely must be pleased about that.

SMOOTH SIPPIN' TENNESSEE WHISKEY

Your friends at Jack Daniel's remind you to drink responsibly.

Tennessee Whiskey • 40-43% alcohol by volume (80-86 proof) • Distilled and Bottled by Jack Daniel Distillery, Lem Motlow, Proprietor, Route 1, Lynchburg (Pop 361), Tennessee 37352 Placed in the National Register of Historic Places by the United States Government.

brings her out of the spiritual crisis by reminding her of the Fat Lady. When they were all quiz-kid celebrities and got tired of performing for the unseen multitude of geeks and rubes in their audience, the sainted Seymour would tell them to do it "for the Fat Lady." And each of them would think of some overweight woman out there in the radio audience, maybe swatting flies on her porch while listening to the show. Don't look down on such people; do the show out of love for the Fat Lady, as Seymour urged them. "But I'll tell you a terrible secret," Zooey tells Franny. "There isn't anyone out there who isn't Seymour's Fat Lady. . . . Don't you know who that Fat Lady really is? . . . It's Christ Himself. Christ Himself, buddy."

A beautiful sentiment: Love every soul on the planet, however alien, for being an embodiment of godhood. But hasn't S. rejected that sentiment in withdrawing from the world, in disdaining contact with the perhaps foolish fans who love his work, in fleeing from the inept, excessive ways in which the world expresses its love for a writer? Isn't S., like Franny, spurning the Fat Lady? Aren't I, in some way, the Fat Lady on his doorstep? Shouldn't S. love me, welcome me, like the Fat Lady?

I listened to the Wall of Silence. And decided just listening wouldn't be enough. I decided on a fourth option. I would write S. a letter and leave it in one of his mailboxes.

Easy to say, but after all this time, after all these years, what did I have to say to S.? What one thing would you say, dear reader, given a chance to communicate with the strange, silent, spiritual artist behind that Wall, the last private person in America?

I decided I needed to think about it overnight. I checked into a nearby country inn (where the proprietor said S. had held an anniversary party with his third wife a couple of years back).

Back at the inn, I checked my answering machine in New York to find an anguished message from Jonathan Schwartz about a just-published attack on S.-well, on "Hapworth," but one that extended to S.'s entire Glass-family oeuvre-by a major critic. Jonathan was sure that S. would see the attack; he thinks of S. as very tuned in to the literary world despite the impression of spiritual detachment. (He reminded me that when his friend and her five-yearold watched Monkey Business with S., the woman noticed stacks of New Yorkers and New York Timeses in S.'s house. Jonathan believes that many are misled by S.'s unworldly spiritual preoccupations and miss out on the mordant comic observations of worldliness his best work displays.) He was afraid the attack would embitter S. and convince him to alter his plans for letting "Hapworth" (and perhaps himself) out into the world again.

I suddenly had an image of S. as Punxsutawney Phil, the well-known groundhog of Groundhog Day. Of S. poking his ever-so-sensitive, twitching nose outside his burrow of silence, seeing his Shadow-sniffing the hostility-and deciding that it wasn't worth it. Returning to Silence forever.

I decided that maybe what I needed to do in the message I was drafting was-in my own ego-bound way-to try to "ease his pain." A kind of homeopathic remedy: a message from a single stranger to a man who feared the great mass of strangers. I say "ego-bound" because the method I chose could not be said to be free of self-serving vanity. I think that at the core of every pilgrimage to S. is the belief of each pilgrim that in his heart he understands the object of the pilgrimage better than anyone else-and the concomitant hope that S. will recognize that, validate that. In some way, he will acknowledge that you, you out of all of them, have penetrated to the heart of the Mystery: At last, I've found someone who knows me.

This plays into my own special vanity about my talent for literary exegesis. And so I started composing a letter on a yellow legal pad that began on an "ease his pain" note but shifted, I'll admit, rather rapidly, to a plea for Recognition.

Dear Mr. Salinger, I began. I hope you won't mind if I pass along this appreciation of your "Hapworth" story. [I was planning to include in the envelope an explicatory essay on "Hapworth" I'd published recently in The New York Observer. I thought you might get a chuckle out of my conjecture in there about the sound of one hand clapping. . . .

This is where my very un-Zen-like vanity announces itself. It was more than a "conjecture": I thought I'd nailed that supposedly unanswerable onehand-clapping koan. See, I once had a conversation about it with a fellow who'd spent seven years in a Zen monastery. He told me what he claimed was the spiritually "correct" answer to the question—that is, the answer an enlightened person would spontaneously come to if he was truly enlightened.

When asked by a master, What is the sound of one hand clapping? the enlightened initiate would just know not to reply in words but, in solemn silence, to raise just one hand from his side and wave it toward the center of his chest as if it were meeting the other hand for a clap. The sound of one hand clapping is the sound of that silent wave, the sound of an absence, the absence of the noise ordinarily made by the collision of two hands. The sound of one hand clapping is the silence one tunes in to in that absence, the resonant silence of the rest of creation, the vast Oneness of Being one absorbs in the absence of that narrowing clap.

That koan about the sound of one hand clapping appears, of course, as the epigraph at the opening of S.'s first collection, Nine Stories. My exegetical triumph was the discovery that if you turn to the first page of the text and begin reading "A Perfect Day for Bananafish," the famous story of Seymour Glass's suicide, you will find a rather astonishing image, a secret, surprising image of the sound of one hand clapping embedded right there. It's there in the description of Seymour's wife, Muriel, drying the lacquer on her nails in their Florida beachfront hotel room. It's there in S.'s description of Muriel waving one hand, "her left-the wet-hand back and forth through the air," to dry her nails. Making the gesture of one hand clapping. I'm confident I'm the only one who has truly understood it. In my handwritten note to S., I said, You'll note the way I expressed my admiration for your ability in that image "to insinuate the sound, the spiritual gesture, of Silence into the cacophonous din of our cosmetic culture."

I concluded by telling S. I was writing a story praising the art, the example, of his silence and that if he had anything to communicate (e.g., Yes, Ron, you alone have understood me), I would be honored to hear from him.

Was my message a product of mixed motives, both selfless and selfish? Yes, it was. But I never claimed to be as spiritually advanced as S. And I have shown restraint; I haven't used the telephone number I have for him.

The next morning, early, I drove back to S.'s driveway. Found the Sunday paper nestled in a U-shaped fold in the Valley News mailbox. I put my

note and my "Hapworth"/one-handclapping essay in an envelope and slipped it into the fold. Stayed a moment to appreciate the silence, then drove off to have breakfast at a Denny's in nearby West Lebanon.

I could have left town then. Perhaps I should have left town then. But instead, I decided to go back. The way I rationalized my return was that I was going back only to see if the letter had at least been taken in with the Sunday paper. And in fact, when I arrived back, the paper was gone, and so was the envelope with my letter. Mission accomplished.

Again, I should have gone then. But there was a magnetism to the place. To S.'s invisible Wall. To the echoing silence that seemed to emanate from S.'s abode. If it was S.'s place. As long as S. remained invisible up there at the end of the driveway behind the NO TRESPASSING signs and the no-name mailbox, it didn't really matter if it was or it wasn't. I could be paying tribute to S.'s silent invisibility anywhere he was invisible.

But I thought I would make one final gesture before heading home, one final tribute to S.'s silent presence or absence. I thought I would make the sound of one hand clapping. And so, facing up to the house, I made the silent one-handed wave. I tuned in to the resonant, silent sound of creation that enveloped me and S., in to all five states of being. I was the Catcher in the Driveway.

And then, to my horror, I heard another sound—the sound of a car engine starting up, the sound of a car heading down the driveway toward me!

Would S. be at the wheel? My whole life passed before me in review. I had fantasized S. reading my letter and my appreciation of Muriel's one-handed wave and silently saying to himself, "At last. Someone who truly understands me and my work."

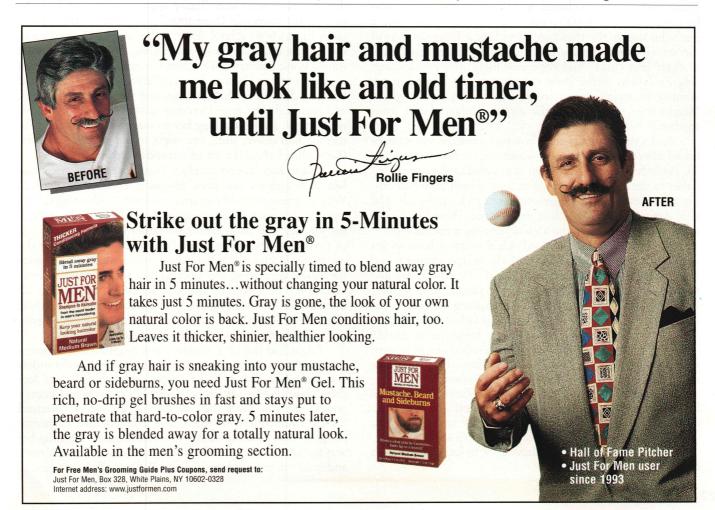
But I hadn't imagined S. finding me on his doorstep, looking like a doorstepper.

The car reached the bottom of the driveway. I was positioned next to my car, about twenty feet to the right. Because of the light, I couldn't see if there were two figures or one in the front seat or what they looked like.

The car paused at the bottom of the driveway. Seemed to take in my presence. And—if it could ever be said it was possible for a car to look furious—this car looked furious. Then roared off to the left, in the opposite direction from me, spraying mud.

In the silence left behind, I felt terrible. I felt a wave of remorse strike me. I had wanted to be known to S. as a serious seeker, someone who understood him and his silence, someone who respected his silent privacybut perhaps someone he might want to speak to (because of my exegetical insights, of course). But now I felt that, inevitably, it looked to S. as if I were a doorstepper. I felt my intrusive driveway presence might inadvertently change S.'s mind about releasing "Hapworth," about releasing anything-that I might have thus ineradicably altered the course of literary history. If S. was Punxsutawney Phil, I was his Shadow. He'd retreat into his burrow; his wintry silence would never end.

I waved after the car. With one hand. Feeling devastated. For God's sake, reader, don't try to follow my path. My only consolation is to hope to hell I had the wrong house.



The Love Song of E. Bronfman Jr.

[continued from page 50] bookcase for a framed snapshot. Mount, now an independent producer, was head of production at Universal Pictures when Bronfman started making movies there. The snapshot, taken at a rakish angle, shows a beardless Edgar Bronfman Jr. on a sofa with Sherry and their three small children; he looks drunk with love as he and his wife try to juggle their brood.

"Look how out of control it is!" Mount cries delighted-

ly. "This was Edgar's Christmas card."

In 1978, when Bronfman came to Universal, the studio was a stodgy place best known for TV movies and disaster pics. Mount and his bosses were trying to make it hipper and younger, and with pictures like Animal House and The Deer Hunter they were succeeding. Bronfman was part of it. But like other newcomers with larger-than-life surnames, he found Hollywood frustrating: Doors opened, but the people inside didn't always treat you well. "Jackie Collins once said, 'Hollywood is great if you don't need it,' " says someone who worked with him at the time, "and that's what people resented—that he wasn't hungry the way they were."

Edgar coped by following some advice he'd gotten from director Frank Perry: Nobody says yes, so the way to get a movie made is to make sure too many people fail to say no. After Edgar spent eighteen months developing a screenplay on illegal Mexican immigrants, Ned Tanen, the studio chief, pronounced it the worst piece of shit he'd ever read in his life. So Bronfman got the biggest yes he could find: Jack

Nicholson. Suddenly, the picture was back on.

If Bronfman's marriage was the first test of his resolve to be his own man, The Border was the second. For months, Edgar and Sherry sweltered in El Paso as the production lurched from one misadventure to another. "This was a guy who was in the trenches," says David Freeman, one of the screenwriters. In the midst of it all, Sherry gave birth to their first child. And then one night, the phone rang: Edgar's father, flying cross-country in his corporate jet, wanted to touch down to see his new granddaughter. Would they meet him at the airport? Edgar didn't want to-but they did.

And so their relationship, however tenuous, was reestablished after a yearlong lapse. A year and a half later, when The Border finally opened, Edgar was persuaded to invite his father to the New York premiere, after which they had dinner at La Côte Basque. Edgar was left to pick up the tab. The next day, his father asked him to his office. Would he like to join the company, with the idea of running it eventually?

For weeks, Edgar agonized. He'd worked hard to get where he was. He had other projects in development, and Universal was willing to renew his deal. "He could have had a very successful career as a movie producer," says Mount. But he wouldn't get another shot at running Seagram. And in the realm of oedipal competition, his father had blinked.

"The most important thing is that Edgar never caved," says a friend from the time. "For all his civility and his charm and the soft patina of his moneyed existence, he was utterly, utterly steely in his resolve to do things his own way."

Edgar flew back to give his answer. When they met, his father said he already knew the answer would be yes. How did he know that? Because, the elder Bronfman replied, you wouldn't fly all the way to New York just to say no.

"You and I," said Edgar, "have a lot to learn about each other.'

HY WAS EDGAR the chosen son? "I think my brother recognized the audaciousness and vision in Edgar Jr.," says his aunt, Phyllis Lambert. "I think he felt Edgar was a lot tougher than the others," says Michael Doug-

las. "But Edgar needed that time away to gain his own identity. When he made the decision to go back, he was ready."

For four years, Edgar worked at high-level jobs-going to London to turn around Seagram Europe, coming back to New York to run the all-important spirits-and-wines group. In 1986, when Edgar was thirty, his father announced in Fortune that he would eventually become Seagram's next CEO.

From his father, Edgar had learned that the liquor business is about mystique. He got rid of low-end, low-margin brands like Wolfschmidt and Ronrico and focused on the premium stuff. In 1988, he took the lead in the \$820 million acquisition of Martell. Too expensive, said the stock analysts, but it gave Seagram something it sorely lacked-distribution in Asia, where cognac is hugely popular and the economy is the fastest growing in the world. (One of the company's favorite products today is Martell L'Or, a brandy that's hot in Chinese nightclubs at \$2,000 to \$3,000 a bottle.) The \$1.2 billion purchase of Tropicana was less successful, as was the \$14 million acquisition of Soho beverages, which was unloaded three years later for a mere \$2 million.

Nonetheless, Edgar was named Seagram's president in 1989. He and Sherry separated around that time; they were divorced two years later. Today, when he's in New York, he goes to her Riverside Drive townhouse in the morning and takes the kids to school. Every other weekend, they go to the 125-acre estate he bought from Dino De Laurentiis in the rolling horse country of Dutchess County, New York. Late in 1990, on a trip to Caracas, he met Clarissa Alcock. He wooed her long-distance with daily roses and weekend rendezvous, and eventually she agreed to come to New York to go to business school. He kept asking her to marry him, and she kept turning him down, until, one night in 1993 at the bar of the Carlyle hotel, she did a turnabout and asked him.

Edgar also wooed Stephen Banner, head of corporate law at Seagram's law firm, Simpson Thacher & Bartlett. When Banner joined Seagram in a strategic-planning capacity in 1991, it soon became apparent that Edgar did not view the job idly. Ten years earlier, his father had won 24 percent of DuPont as the spoils of a failed attempt to take over the oil giant Conoco. DuPont had performed nicely over the years, generating the cash to pay for Seagram's diversification, but it seemed unlikely to do so indefinitely. So Banner and the two Edgars-after discussions with Herbert Allen, Felix Rohatyn of Lazard Frères, and Seagram's advisers at Goldman, Sachs-decided to invest elsewhere.

Edgar had the idea, timely if not original, that Western pop culture was the commodity of the future. His definition was inclusive-Calvin Klein, Barbra Streisand, Michael Jordan, Nirvana. He and Banner looked at fashion and luxury goods, but the deals they wanted didn't work. Michael Ovitz, whom Herbert Allen had ushered into corporate mergers, was pushing them on entertainment. Nothing big was for sale, so they decided to buy a stake in Time Warner and hold on, just as they'd ridden DuPont all these years.

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Nobody suspected then that MCA would be available. But as Bronfman and Time Warner chairman Gerald Levin began playing cat and mouse over lunch at the Four Seasons, executives at Matsushita were forced to recall 420,000 refrigerators because of a flaw in their compressors. This and other recalls led to massive write-offs, which, together with allegations of financial mismanagement, compelled Matsushita's president, Akio Tanii, to resign. Tanii had been the driving force behind Matsushita's purchase of MCA. With him gone, Matsushita's attitude toward its American entertainment subsidiary began to change.

Stephen Banner had helped with the sale of MCA to Matsushita; now, though fatally ill with lung cancer, he helped broker its second sale. In March 1995, Bronfman flew alone to Osaka and won a chance to make an exclusive bid. On April 6, DuPont agreed to buy back virtually all of Seagram's holdings for \$8.8 billion-a sizable discount, but one with provisions that would save Seagram \$1.5 billion in taxes. Three days later, Bronfman struck a

deal with Matsushita.

In the thick of it all, Edgar got a call from his friend Bruce Roberts, who was recording an album for Atlantic Records. Bronfman and Roberts had written three songs together (Edgar supplies the lyrics, Roberts the music), and Roberts needed a new line for the title cut, a ballad called "Intimacy," which they'd written for Clarissa. The two men had been partners since they were introduced by a music publisher two decades before; Ashford & Simpson and Celine Dion have recorded their songs, and they gave Dionne Warwick a hit with "Whisper in the Dark." Bronfman's lyrics, which often deal with the elusiveness of love, are wistful and romantic; Roberts's music provides the perfect cushion. He gave Roberts five minutes.

Roberts showed up at his office on the fifth floor of the Seagram Building on Park Avenue and recited the line he had: "You're the gentle breath on an open sore." Bronfman gazed out the window, then scribbled: "You're the savior

I've been waiting for."

Bronfman had abandoned film producing when he joined Seagram, but he wouldn't give this up. His friends describe songwriting as a bridge to his artistic side—a lifeline. "The world would not particularly notice if Edgar never wrote another song," says Terrence McNally. "But he would notice."

It serves another function, too. "It's something your father can't do," observes Michael Douglas. "Nobody can take it away from you."

VEN AFTER HE sold DuPont and bought MCA, the first stock on the ticker on Bronfman's desk was Seagram's, the second DuPont's. And what a sad tale the ticker told-Seagram trudging uphill through the thirties during the greatest bull market in history while DuPont was wafted aloft like a hot-air balloon. As DuPont, which Seagram had sold in April 1995 at about \$56 per share, climbed to \$80, \$90, \$100, and beyond, consternation gave way to alarm. From 375 Park Avenue, it began to look as if MCA had a lot to make up for.

Last April, Forbes calculated that Edgar had lost almost \$9 billion on the MCA acquisition—the difference between the \$8.8 billion Seagram got for its DuPont stake and the \$17.6 billion that stock would be worth today. Never mind that the run-up in DuPont happened in large part precisely because of the Seagram sale: In the buyback, DuPont took nearly a quarter of its stock out of circulation, boosting its earnings per share and making the shares scarcer. "The sale of DuPont is the decision that haunts Seagram today," one insider maintains.

So the pressure is on. Most CEOs, when they think about the shareholders, envision a few institutional fund managers standing out amid a great mass of anonymous faces. For Bronfman, the shareholders aren't anonymous at all. They're his father down the hall and his uncle Charles in Montreal and all the family members who stand to benefit. "The value of that stock is extraordinarily important to Edgar," says David Geffen. "He has a sense of responsibility to the family, to take care of the company so it takes care of the family. There's nothing that drives him more than that."

"He doesn't really have to take care of the family, you know," counters Phyllis Lambert. "Edgar Sr. felt highly competitive toward his father-he was determined to increase the wealth of the company well over what his father had done. And I think Edgar Jr. actually has the same goal."

Whatever his objective, the role Bronfman plays today is one he assumed fitfully but inevitably, starting with his adolescent attempts to look after his siblings. "They all live in their own worlds now," says Michael Douglas-Sam II in the Bay Area, heading Seagram's wine operations; Holly in Virginia; Matthew in New York, partnering with society florist Robert Isabel in his Parfums Isabel; Adam in California, a karate instructor-"but I think they're closer than even they realize. When you have a famous name, you look out for each other, because it draws attention to itself in any situation. So there's a sense of protecting them. Not necessarily that they need it, but it's part of asserting himself as the patriarch of his generation."

That means making hard decisions, even if they conflict with the impulses that brought him to Hollywood in the first place. Last fall, Bronfman and his executives concluded that they were putting too much money into movies—their core business, and also their worst. From now on, they'd look for outside partners to share production costs, and they'd focus on big-budget "event" pictures like Dante's Peak and the Jim Carrey hit Liar Liar at the expense of more thoughtful small- and mediumrange films, on which the odds of making a profit are even lower. Could the Edgar Bronfman who made The Border land a deal at the studio he heads today? "It's a

different time," an insider observes.

After his fourth child, Aaron Edgar, was born last September, Bronfman started spending half his time on the Coast, staying out for a couple of months at a time instead of just two or three days. It's nice to be back in Hollywood, but it's different when you've staked the family trust on a global entertainment giant that's jockeying for position in the twenty-first century. The first time Edgar came to Universal, he was doing it for himself, for the sheer love of show business. Now he's doing it for the family. Now he's doing it as the patriarch.

He should keep the beard. 12



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the sidekick inside me

[continued from page 65] ambivalence over becoming what he is now: "When I heard the word sidekick, I thought, 'I don't

know. . . . 'It kind of implies lackey."

Perhaps in another man's grasp it does, but Richter is not simply another man. Well, he sort of is, but anyway: Ingrained with farm-boy innocence (Yorkville, Illinois), spitpolished by improvisational stagecraft in Chicago, he is a monument of gentle self-assuredness-happily contrasting with the jangles of O'Brien. ("I have like a sugar energy; I'm manic," Conan told me. "Andy always seemed more at peace with himself, just very centered.") Words tumble out of Richter unhurriedly, economically, and almost always they are funny, detonating like magic bullets. A random exchange: "Let me ask you something, Andy," said Conan, at desk. "What do we always try to do on this late-night program?" Andy, stroking chin: "Uh . . . skim money out of petty cash?"

Hired as a writer, he was not asked to write so much as to just be around. During lighting tests on Bob Costas's old Later set, he played O'Brien's guest, and luminous alchemy emerged. His fate was sealed. Then he was given rein to mock couch-bound boredom. Unprecedented! A regular feature aimed an isolated camera on him suffering through Conan's guest chats, sneaking cigarettes, reading the paper, playing catch. He sidekicked live from an aerial blimp over Manhattan. He invaded the Miss America Pageant, where he confounded contestants by demanding they find their home states on a map. And he spoofed the sidekick's need for "outside projects," making idiotic music videos, playing Elizabeth Taylor in a TV movie, and so on. Moreover, he became chief comic counsel to his host. Just before each show, he helps Conan pick and order the monologue jokes. ("He has really made me a big partner in this process, which he didn't have to do.") More of a team than their predecessors, they are each often asked in public where the other guy is.

Conan told me, "People want to believe that when the show's over, we get on a bicycle built for two, ride it back to our house, I get in the top bunk, he gets in the bottom bunk, we put on our sleeping caps, and begin synchronized Three Stooges snoring. And maybe that's the way it should be. I've got to talk to Andy's wife about this."

MY TRIUMPHANT FIRST MEETING with my host! At a holiday party in the sky-rise home of Regis and Joy Philbin, there stood Chuck Grodin, hunkered in a corner with Tony Bennett. He saw me coming. His eyes widened in mock terror. (Well, it looked mock.) He put down his champagne glass and made a move to bolt. Just as Larry Sanders does when he sees Hank Kingsley! Our chemistry was that instantaneous. I tried not to be funnier than him. Pain creasing his face, he told me that our night would be scheduled as long as Regis agreed to be his guest. "But there should be lawyers on the set, too," he said worriedly.

Poolside, Los Angeles, betrunked actor Jeffrey Tambor, who is not a sidekick but plays one, spoke of the occupation: "The guy's got the best job in the world! I mean, his job is literally sixty minutes long. That's it!" He meant the character "Hey, Now!" Hank Kingsley, his bungling alter ego on Garry Shandling's fine true-life fiction, The Larry Sanders Show. But he might as well have meant me. My sixty

minutes neared, and who better to take advice from than another pretender, albeit a professional one with Emmy nominations? Hank, as essayed perfectly by Tambor, is a man of quiet desperation and acute simplicity. Also, he is a former cruise director. How he coined his catchphrase: "I said 'Hey,' then I said 'Now.' Then I just sort of put 'em together!" Both tolerated and besmirched by his host, Hank lives obliviously and loves his couch. Among the pointers I cribbed from Tambor on the Kingsley style: "It is written that he is subservient, you know. . . . The key to Hank's character is that he's vulnerable. . . . He's always happy. . . . He's a total professional, a very good announcer, but as a man he's a total amateur. . . . I don't think he's stupid, but that might just be me." I asked him what essential talent I should hone before my debut. "Listen . . . he said. "I am," I said. "Listen, listen . . . " he said. "Yes, sir, go ahead," I said. "No, no, listen!" he repeated. "That's it! Just listen! And don't push. And react naturally. And try to be in the moment. And listen."

THE PROPHECY CAME from on high: "I don't know... Grodin could put it in another dimension. You'll get that caustic stuff he does. He's very strange. But if you've made a deal, you've made a deal." I did not listen. Even though the one who warned me was the one who knows like no other: Ed McMahon, monolith and sole deity of upholstery. To be near him is to feel your own power magnified exponentially. If he is there, you are better, especially if he is ordering the wine. Just as Ed pressed fingertips together and bowed each night to a spotlit Nebraskan, I had come to Beverly Hills to pay him like worship. At age seventyfour, he is ageless; no longer bearish of torso, he remains eternally Big, as does the Laugh that rumbles up from the caverns of his vessel and has made him millions.

I found him at home, itself Big, in his office, sort of small, whose walls and shelves bulged with Carsonia and McMahonia and mementos from Budweiser (for which he has voiced three decades of commercials). "See my pewter Clydesdales back there?" he said proudly. "There are only three of those in the world!" Piled before him was three thousand dollars in cash, large increments of which he was stuffing into holiday envelopes. "Gratuities," he explained. Weeks later, we met for lunch at the Polo Lounge, where he commands the coveted corner booth by the bar-"I've been sitting at this table for thirty-something years"-and where he is revered by the staff. "I'm gonna write a new Bible," I heard a veteran waiter tell him, "and you're gonna be the master subject!" (Gratuities, natch.)

How it got to be like this: As per legend, they came together, host and announcer, on the game show Who Do You Trust? in October 1958, never to part until the King's elegant abdication. Just days before their first Tonight Show (October 1, 1962), however, the announcer wondered, "What the hell am I gonna do to be distinctive? I gotta do something!" He focused on the introduction. Whereas Hugh Downs had simply intoned, "Here's Jack!" McMahon would elongate: "Heeeeeeeeeeeeere's Johnny!" ("Instead of the r, I did it with the e. I knew it was right, because everybody picked up on it the next day.") "Hi-yo!" meanwhile, was suggested by a producer, although Ed torqued that as well. "You have to say it with a lot of o's. You know, 'Hi-yooooooohh!'" We practiced together for a while. And it was he who decided that Carnac the Magnificent's hermetically sealed envelopes be kept in a mayonnaise jar on Funk & Wagnalls's porch since noon today. "Funk is funny, you know," he said. "Words with k are funny." He claims, however, to have never said, "You are correct, sir!" On the other hand: "I may have said, 'Yes!' The yes was very emphatic. But then, my role was to supply punctuation."

And, as with all sidekicks before or since, he clung fast to the rules of self-denial and modulated intercourse. "You have to be in there when you're needed but way the hell out when you're not needed," he instructed, the final authority. "Instinct is everything about the job. And you have microseconds to make your choice." So infallible were his instincts that a singular 1965 misstep torments him even now: "Carson was reading a news item about how mosquitoes will gravitate to the most passionate people. Without thinking, I slapped my arm and said, 'Ah! There's another one!' Big, big laugh. But I get this look from Carson, those steely blues, you know? Then he pulls from behind the desk this giant prop can of insect repellent and said, 'Well, there's \$500 shot!' He was going to spray himself, but I very innocently stole his joke. My joke was better, but I felt terrible."

I would feel worse. What transpired March 19 over CNBC airwaves should best be left to hazed memory. Unfortunately, it was videotaped, and I have watched the debacle repeatedly. It happened in Fort Lee, New Jersey, whence the Charles Grodin program emanates. Weeks earlier, my host had sprung his plan on me: For a good portion of the show, I would be sequestered alone in the backstage greenroom with a camera trained on me, practicing sidekick craft—laughing, nodding, punctuating, feeding, listening. (Alone?) Then, from the studio, Grodin would cut over to me, assessing whether my skill was worthy. "Somehow, toward the end," he promised, "we get you out there. See, that way it turns into a piece of entertainment."

"He doesn't get it!" Regis said, astutely, as we rode to Fort Lee on show day. "The point of a second banana is that he is there always, at his man's beck and call!" (Grodin did want me there the afternoon before, ironically, when he wasn't around. At his behest, I had pretaped my greenroom buffoonery, improvising variations of subservience: "Yes!" "You are right!" "And how are you, sir?" "That's terrific!" It didn't feel very good.) Instead of me, it would be Regis who flanked Grodin when the show began. "Ughhh, I gotta talk to him for an hour?" Philbin groused upon hearing this. "I guess the O. J. thing is over, and now I gotta pay for it!" Meanwhile, I spent the first thirty-five minutes of the program nowhere near my host. I sat by a monitor in the makeup room and watched him talk about me.

To encapsulate: Maundering into his camera, Grodin opened, "The devil tried to buy my soul two months ago—the devil, under the name of Bill Zehme." It was that bad. It got worse. "This guy really tried to corrupt my morals," he told Regis and viewership alike. "He said he would like to be my sidekick on this show. And, as a result, I could have a wonderful piece written about me in Esquire. That's what I call selling your soul." Valiantly, Regis leaped to my defense, explaining the integrity of this

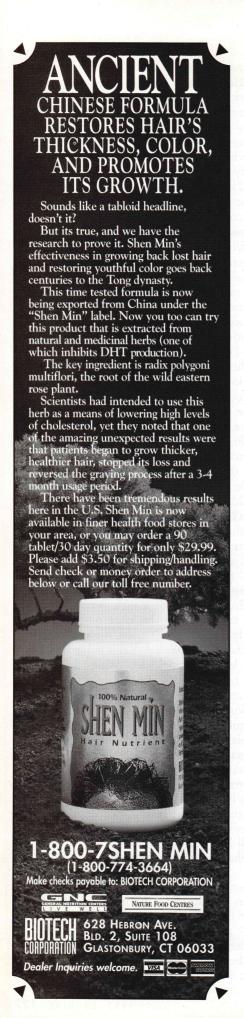
reportorial exercise and how Grodin was mistaken and should feel honored. He also said, "I have seen your new ratings at eleven o'clock. You need Zehme and you need Esquire! In second-banana tradition, he should be sitting here right now." They sparred for several more minutes; then Grodin said, "I want to see what kind of sidekick he would be. Let's see what he's doing now." The director cued up a sliver of my greenroom tape. There I laughed and toadied like a fool in soliloguy. Moments later, he did it again, and then again. "Oh, please!" Regis finally begged. "I think he's ready to come out!"

For the fourth segment, I emerged and was seated offcamera among a handful of Grodin's staff members. "We want to get you acclimated to the studio," he said a bit patronizingly. Then he asked me to laugh, which I did, pitifully, because it was my job. "Wait!" he interrupted. "I didn't say anything funny yet." (Tell me about it.) He further usurped time, forcing Regis to address videotaped (mind-numbing) questions from random people in the street. I was asked to laugh twice more and did so, supportively, though without conviction, I fear. Responding to a gun-control question, Grodin asked me if I had a gun. "Not on me," I said, for which he looked relieved. Then: "After this break, we're gonna bring up the sidekick."

Eleven minutes remained. During the commercials, I took the chair beside Regis, across from Grodin, who consulted his pocket mirror and arranged his hairpiece. Just before we returned to the air, he told me to look at Regis, which I did, obediently, as the camera relit. He asked Regis why he liked Donald Duck, to which Regis said, among other things, "He didn't get enough attention." Grodin, to me: "Bill, do you find that interesting?" Me, to Regis: "Very interesting. Is that because Donald is a lot like you?" Regis, to me: "See, you don't understand. Second bananas don't interview." I nodded. (Quite nicely, I thought.) Grodin then repeated his question so I could try it again. This time, I gave a small chuckle. "That's a little better," said Grodin. "Thanks," I said. During the next question, I laughed inappropriately once, was chastised, then laughed with precision and was complimented. Regis suggested I ask Grodin why he had no sidekick. "Well," I said, "I think it's apparent now, isn't it?" Then I told Grodin that I was his friend, as a sidekick must be, and he said, "Why are you still talking?"

At last, surprise guest Ed McMahon weighed in, via satellite from California: "Well, I'll give you the appraisal here in Burbank," he said, meaning my debut work. "It's kinda less than exhilarating." He told me, "You're so sure of what you do as yourself, you're not getting yourself into the role. You haven't been in when needed, you haven't been out when not needed. You haven't done anything!" Added Regis, "And, when needed, be a little more subservient." Then we all laughed and the show ended and Grodin said, "I think that worked pretty well."

THAT NIGHT, I MET ANDY RICHTER after his show finished taping. He took me to the Rainbow Room atop Rockefeller Center, where we drank many martinis and I regaled him with my sidekicking experience. As we slouched at the bar, he asked with genuine interest, "Did you enjoy it?" The martinis, I believe, expedited the vomiting, which came a few hours later. 19



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For more information contact: Breitling, 800-641-7343. Chaps Ralph Lauren, 800-458-3495. Costume Homme, c/o Staff USA, 495 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. DKNY, 800-231-0884. Dolce & Gabbana, 532 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. Gianfranco Ferre Jeans, c/o Fashion Ave., Inc., 712 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10019. Granello, 50 West 57th St., New York, NY 10019. Gucci, 685 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10022. Guess, 800-394-8377. Iceberg, 745 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10151. Jeans Dolce & Gabbana, c/o Fashion Ave., Inc., 712 Fifth Ave., New York, NY 10019. Loro Piana, 46 East 61st St., New York, NY 10021. Moschino Jeans Uomo, c/o Moda & Co., 30 West 56th St., New York, NY 10019. New York Industrie, c/o Staff USA, 495 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. Polo Jeans Co., 800-700-7656. **Prada**, 50 West 57th St., New York, NY 10019. Richard Edwards, 145 Spring St., New York, NY 10012. Valentino Jeans, 747 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10022. Wilke-Rodriguez, 800-449-4553.

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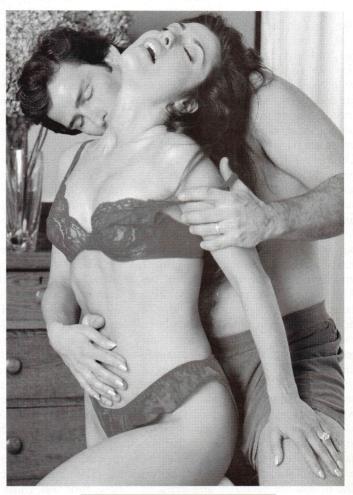
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[continued from page 132] Merci's cholecystogram. A Cuban MRI technician called her gallbladder a "puta." Another specialist resorted to jailhouse bluster, threatening to make Merci's gallbladder his "girlfriend."

When I speak to the surgeon over the phone, he sounds disconcertingly like Simon Le Bon. This causes me some consternation. Of all the members of Duran Duran, Simon Le Bon is the one I'd least trust to remove my wife's gallbladder. My apprehensions are completely allayed, though, when I meet the dude in person. He's a burly, no-nonsense kind of guy, and I can easily see why he's considered the Eric Lindros of laparoscopic cholecystectomies. He's got the size, speed, aggressiveness, and finesse you want in a surgeon. We authorize him to go in, find Merci's gallbladder, and take it out.

Merci's scheduled for early-morning surgery at a famous, swanky uptown Manhattan hospital. So I hunker down in the supremely gemütlich Ambulatory Surgery Family Waiting Lounge. There's a woman seated at a desk whose job it is to answer phone calls from the various surgeons and recovery nurses and then keep family members apprised of the conditions of their spouses, parents, children, et cetera. Realizing immediately that this woman reigns supreme here, I decide to get in her good graces pronto. I offer to man the phones for her so that she can get coffee, grab some food, go to the bathroom, stretch her legs, whatever. She thanks me profusely and explains that when a surgeon's call comes in, I should jot down the information, then call out the name of the patient and convey that information to the responding family member. "I can do that," I say. So she leaves and returns quickly, during which time the phone doesn't ring even once. About ten minutes later, though, she asks if I'd mind covering for her again. "Go ahead," I say. This begins to happen repeatedly, and each successive absence is longer and longer. I don't know if this woman has a weak bladder or what the hell her problem is, but I end up manning the phones for most of the morning. I become the Ambulatory Surgery Family Waiting Lounge Ombudsman.

At first, it's not so bad. But after a while, the incessant importuning really starts to get on my nerves. I mean, c'mon, this is ambulatory surgerynothing's life-and-death here. I realize that my responses are getting a bit cavalier, even flip. To a guy who's been badgering me every five minutes, a guy with a major attitude problem, I report: "The surgeon just called, sir. Apparently, they've discovered a luminescing Vibrio fischeri in your wife's rectum, a bacterium that's typically found in the light organs of squid. They've taken her by chopper to the Institute for the Study of Paranormal Marine Bioluminescence in Woods Hole, Massachusetts, and they

want you to meet them there right away."

Merci's surgery, on the other hand, is uneventful and by all accounts an unqualified success. She's out of recovery at about 3:00 P.M., and we're on the road. Now, it's not uncommon for patients recovering from general anesthesia to experience nausea. And Merci is true to form. We're cruising down Ninth Avenue toward the Lincoln Tunnel when

she flashes me the international sign for "Pull over, I'm going to puke." I quickly scan the street and deftly maneuver the car alongside a group of men huddled at the curb who also happen to be vomiting. There's an emetic joie de vivre in New York that I just don't think you find in other cities.

That night, as I lie in bed next to my sedated, newly perforated wife, I feel a great sense of relief. Seeing someone you love in great pain is a wrenching experience, and I'm thankful that the cause of that pain has been eradicated once and for all. I succumb quickly to a happy, deferred exhaustion.

I am not asleep very long, though, when the palpable presence of some thing awakens me.

And there, illuminated in the darkness by a shaft of moonlight, is a yellowish-green, pear-shaped sac, approximately eight centimeters long, hovering-spinning, actually-in the air over the bed.

> It's Merci's gallbladder! And it's reproaching us in the

idiot-saint drawl of Billy Bob Thornton. It's taunting us about Merci's nowimpaired ability to metabolize lipids: "No more french-fried pertayters."

The gallbladder floats around the room as it continues its eerie oration.

"I miss you," it whispers to Merci, with a sort of haunting anguish. "I miss being inside you. I miss your bile....I miss your cholecystokininpancreozymin," it keens, referring to the hormone that causes the gallbladder to contract and empty bile into the duodenum.

"How could you do this to me?" it entreats in a horrific, echoing wail.

The doctor is

considered the

Eric Lindros of

laparoscopic

cholecystectomies.

He's got the size,

speed, and finesse

you want in

a surgeon.

"How could you do this to me?"

When and how the gallbladder departs, I can't say. Whether this actually happened, I can't say with certainty.

But how else to explain the words BUTCHERS! and SEE YOU IN HELL! that I find the next morning scrawled in dried bile on the wall?

IT'S AMAZING how quickly a story enters into a child's mytholo-

gy, subsuming all the other stories like some kind of continually expanding tribal myth of cosmogony.

The next night, for instance, I'm back at my old post, seated alongside Gaby's bed, and I ask, "What do you want to hear tonight, sweetheart, maybe a little 'East Coker'?'

"No, Daddy, I want to hear the story about how Mommy puked on Ninth Avenue."

So I start.

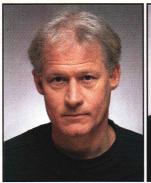
"Once upon a time, Mommy and Daddy were driving home from the hospital, and—"

"No, no, no," she objects. "From the beginning." I start again.

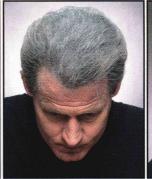
"Once upon a time, Daddy had just finished reciting T. S. Eliot's 'Little Gidding' to his daughter, Gaby, and he went upstairs, and there was Mommy doubled over in agony. . . . "

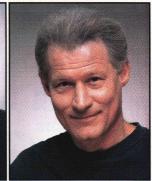
And the child's eyes glisten with anticipation, as if Scheherazade had begun.

And by the time I get to the part about being stalked by the estranged gallbladder, she's, like . . . gone. 12









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Gall in the Family

A children's bedtime story with ambulatory surgery and lots of bile

No, this isn't some hideous, misguided attempt to subliminally inculcate the kid with high culture.

What happened was, we had this baby-sitter whose bedtime reading list apparently consisted of whatever her schoolwork happened to be at the moment, and the Eliot took. Obviously, I had to fire the girl-I'm not going to be put in a position where my daughter can fall asleep only if I read her French irregular-verb conjugations—but I have to admit, Four Quartets works like a charm, and when you find a safe, reliable pediatric soporific, you stick with it.

So I give the sleeping Gaby a soft kiss on the forehead and clamber lightly upstairs, where-upon the peaceful felicity of domestic ritual is shattered by the ghastly sight of my wife, Mercedes, doubled over in agony.

"Chest pain . . . shooting up into my shoulder," she groans through clenched teeth.

I grab a guide to medical emergencies, flip to the section titled "Am I Having a Coronary?" and go down the list with Merci. Chest pains? "Check," she says. Pain radiating to the shoulder? "Check." Nausea? "Check."

Cold extremities? I feel her hands. Ice-cold.

Loss of consciousness? She passes out. I call 911.

HOURS GO BY at the emergency room with no word on Merci's condition. A direct request for information like "Could you please check on the status of Mercedes Leyner" is met with the sort of openmouthed cognitive vapor lock you get when



you hand a teenage supermarket cashier an unpriced item.

"Is my wife alive?" I finally ask, weeping, falling to my knees, my hands clasped in groveling subjugation. The woman looks up from her copy of Suzanne Somers's Eat Great, Lose Weight and rolls her eyes. She lumbers off to points unknown. More vast, eonlike periods

of time pass. She returns. "You can go in now," she says impassively.

Merci's on a gurney, looking tired but in less pain.

"Her heart's fine," says someone in green scrubs with a stethoscope around his neck, someone I suspect has drugged and hog-tied a real doctor and donned his clothes. "It was reflux . . . indigestion."

First thing the following morning, I take Merci into Manhattan to see my cousin, my gastroenterologist. I have zero faith in last night's

"diagnosis"—that reflux business was bullshit. My cousin's a diagnostic genius and a virtuoso palpater. He can glean your HDL level from the smell of your breath. He can kiss you on the forehead and give you a triglyceride count that's accurate down to the molecule. He kneads Merci's abdomen for several moments.

"She had a gallbladder attack," he says with steely certitude. "It's sick and it has to come out."

Merci asks about the repercussions of losing one's gallbladder.

"It's a nonevent," he says, his voice tinged with contempt.

Merci and I find that disdain for the gallbladder—a reservoir for the bile that's secreted by the liver—is rife throughout the medical profession. It's one of the most despised and reviled organs in the human body. It's the white trash of viscera. One doctor whom my cousin had us consult called the gallbladder a "punk-ass motherfucker" and a "bitch" and actually spit at [continued on page 130]



One protects the cranium, the cerebral cortex, and medulla oblongata. The other protects the stuff you really care about. They're both heavy duty. Water resistant. Designed for outdoor use. And can take all kinds of punishment. But only one plays AM, FM, and all your favorite tapes. Besides, wear a hardhat while you're out jogging, and people will talk.



